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# Clark's Peoples Commentary

I. II. AND III. JOHN, JUDE,  
AND REVELATION

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## PREFACE

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THE writings of John move in so ideal a sphere that they seem remote from our common life and thought. No New Testament writer, however, comes closer to our everyday thinking than John. He writes directly for his own times, confuting heresies and presenting the complete truth. The questions of John's day are the questions that stir men's minds to-day. Do all men sin? Are any living a sinless life? To the latter John says No! Must all aim at a life beyond sin, not "the higher life," but the highest life? John answers Yes. John gives the ideal portrait of the Christian life—this must always be borne in mind—speaking of the Christian as he will be when Christ's work is done. In the same way Paul, a more logical writer than John, declares that the believer is dead to sin as shown symbolically in his burial in baptism. He then urges believers to make the symbolic teaching true in their lives.

The great question of John's day and of our day is: Who is Jesus Christ? How large is he? John stands by the deity of Jesus and his true humanity, presenting a divine-human Saviour beyond whom there can be no one. The peril in his day, as in our day, was that men would go beyond Christ. With many to-day the human consciousness has a more commanding power than the eternal Word, who is himself the truth.

The doctrinal teaching of the Apocalypse is clear and pronounced. It emphasizes the person of Christ, the inseparable union of sin and judgment, God's overruling power in the world's history, the blessed consummation of holiness, the eternal conditions in the unseen life. It unfolds to us the divine machinery.

John's writings in Revelation, coming in visions that at times seem bewildering to our Western minds, seem even more remote than his other productions from the common thoughts of men. Is there a superintending power in the world? Does God watch over his cause upon the earth? Will the gospel of Christ get control of affairs here? Will Christianity displace all its rivals for the hearts of men? Does prayer avail to change the current of human affairs? Is Jesus Christ in an equal rank with the Father? Will all opposing agencies be put down? Will the prophecies be fulfilled? Will Satan be crushed under foot? Will punishment for the finally impenitent be eternal?—all these questions are discussed in a symbolic way. But clearly, the one great commanding thought of the book is the rightful sovereignty of Jesus over the universe of men and things, and his getting possession of this sovereignty.

The numerous commentaries written on this book differ widely in their interpretations, so widely indeed that many turn from it feeling that there is no light in it for us, and no certainty as to its meaning. The author has aimed

to give a consistent and reasonable unfolding of the book. May the general system of interpretation here given be as serviceable to others as it has been helpful to him. As we study the book we need to pray with more than Milton's earnestness

What in me is dark, illumine.

The Bible opens with a first Adam, a sinless Eden, and then a lost paradise. The book closes with a second Adam, and a paradise restored. As we stand in presence of the open gates of the New Jerusalem may we join with Bernard of Cluny (A. D. 1145) in singing:

Oh, sweet and blessed country,  
The home of God's elect!  
Oh, sweet and blessed country,  
That eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us  
To that dear land of rest,  
Who art, with God the Father,  
And Spirit, ever blest!

The author takes the occasion to express his obligation to Dr. G. W. Clark for many valuable suggestions in the preparation of this work, also for his help in preparing it for the press.

HIGHTSTOWN, N. J.

O. P. EACHES.

## A FINAL WORD

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The aim of this work, of which this volume is the last, has been to furnish a popular commentary, on a critical basis, to a class of Bible students, Sunday-school teachers, and others, who have not the time, or the ability, to go to the original sources. The constant questions have been : What did the New Testament writers intend to express? What ideas did they convey to their Christian readers? How can their thoughts be best expressed to us now? In what prayerful spirit are we to receive and accept them?

The critical Greek text has been constantly referred to in the preparation of this work. Earlier and later versions have been consulted; critical and popular commentaries compared; works of travel, histories of the church and of doctrines, treatises on the life of Christ and on the travels of Paul, and grammatical authorities of the New Testament have been constantly and carefully employed.

Each volume is made independent of the others. This is especially true of the Gospel of Mark, to which attention is invited. The relation of the four Gospels to one another, and of the Acts of the Apostles as a central book of the New Testament, is presented in the Harmony of the Gospels and the Harmony of the Acts.

The Remarks at the end of the chapters form an additional brief practical and doctrinal commentary. The many scriptural references arranged beneath the text, and others introduced into the notes, will assist those who desire to explain Scripture by Scripture. The object is not to do away with study, but rather to excite study and aid it.

The Scripture text is put in paragraph form, as the division of chapters into verses often interferes with the connection of thought, and impedes a quick and intelligent view of many passages. To aid the eye and facilitate study different kinds of type are used; and subjects, or leading events, are placed at the head of principal paragraphs, or divisions.

Besides the two Harmonies, nine volumes complete the commentary, the last two volumes being prepared by O. P. Eaches, D. D., whose valuable labors are hereby gratefully acknowledged.

This work I now lay down at the feet of the Lord with devout thankfulness for having seen its accomplishment, praying that he will pardon defects, and bless it to his own glory and the advancement of his kingdom.

GEO. W. CLARK.

HIGHTSTOWN, N. J., April, 1910.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

### THE AUTHOR.

The early church bears testimony to John's authorship of this letter. The external evidence is very strong. This letter is not of those called the antilegomena, those which were disputed. Polycarp, a disciple of John (ob. 166) has a reference to 1 John 4:3. Irenaeus, born A. D. 115, has quotations from this letter as Eusebius in his "Church History" testifies. Clement of Alexandria, born A. D. 150, gives testimony to this letter as written by John. Tertullian, born A. D. 150, in his work against Marcion quotes 1 John 4:1. Cyprian of North Africa, born about A. D. 200, has a quotation from this letter. In the list of New Testament books mentioned by the Muratorian Fragment, A. D. 175, this letter is given as one written by John. Eusebius, born about A. D. 260, classes this letter as one of the acknowledged New Testament writings. The Peshito version of the Scriptures in the second century contains it. The first discordant note is not heard until five centuries had passed away. In the sixth century, a writer evidently ill informed, asserts that this writing was not admitted into the sacred writings in the early centuries. It is true that the sect called the Alogi, A. D. 200, did not accept it. It did not conform to their teachings. The heretic Marcion, A. D. 150, excluded this letter as he did all of John's writings from his list of accepted books. What did not conform to his views was thrown aside.

The internal evidence is equally strong and convincing. If there were no external testimony in its favor, and we had the two writings, John's Gospel and this letter, we would be convinced that the same mind gave birth to both. The method of thought, the style of the books, the terms employed, all agree as to this. No less than thirty-five passages in the Gospel of John find a corresponding place in this letter. Compare 1:1, 2, 14 of the Gospel with 1:1, 2 of this letter. For the entire list see the introduction in "Lange." It is worthy of notice also that the larger part of these quotations are from the closing discourses of Jesus. The resemblances of the two are not of a mere outward kind that can be seen or counted, they belong to the very structure of the writings themselves; they can be felt by the attentive reader. The writer of this letter shows that he stood in personal fellowship with Jesus (1:3). In the Gospel he is that one who lay on the bosom of Jesus. The beloved disciple is preeminently that one who would discourse about love as the embodiment of God's character, as the moving principle in the Christian life, as the bond uniting

Christians together. The rich experience of a long Christian life, the consciousness of an undisputed apostleship, give to his words a calmness and clearness, a self-conscious power that comes out in 4 : 6. There is in his statements an apostolic power becoming one who, at the close of the first century, alone remained of the apostolic group. We may attribute this letter to the author of the Gospel, the Apostle John, the only one who could have written this letter. Compare B. F. Westcott, "Commentary on the Epistles of St. John" (1886). Besides exegesis and comments it presents many collations of Johannine terms and phrases. So also Plummer, "The Epistle of St. John," introduction (Cambridge Bible, 1883-1906).

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER.

John writes with a practical aim. The letter is a real tract for the times. In two places John indicates his purpose (1 : 4; 5 : 18). It is to keep his readers in their fellowship with God that they may possess a perfect joy. Fellowship with God is possible only in a holy life of love, a love rooted in faith in Jesus who is the manifestation of God. The Christian life is not an outward and mechanical relation, but an inner one; the believer is begotten of God. There is a strong polemic spirit in the letter, even though the book presents an unruffled surface. John makes unrelenting war upon the falsehood that had appeared, that was perverting a right conception of the person of Christ. From the introduction to the close we can understand the letter only by bearing in mind the heresies that were then rife. The Epistle grew out of the circumstances and needs of the times, as Paul's letters were called forth by the special needs of the different spiritual communities. So far as we gather from the letter itself there was no persecution, nothing intense at least. The hatred of the world is spoken of (3 : 18), but such a hatred is found in every age when the church is true to its mission as a witness for Christ. The struggles of the overcoming young men (2 : 13, 14) are spiritual contests rather than outward persecutions. It was an era of comparative peace and quiet. There are cautions, not to a firm endurance of persecution, but to steadfastness in the Christian life, and counsels against the seductions of the world, against false teachings. The first enthusiasm of the Christian life had passed away, a period of falling away had ensued. The lusts of the world were asserting their power (2 : 15-17), false teachers had arisen who tore themselves away from the Christian fellowship and were luring others away. A mighty heresy was taking shape in John's day that was destined to exert a wide influence in the first centuries. Gnosticism was a teaching that lay great stress on knowledge rather than on redemption, the word itself meaning knowledge. Docetism was a teaching that denied the reality of the person of Jesus making it only a phantom, an appearance. The attack was made by these errorists on the central point of Christianity, the doctrine of the person of Christ. John makes as the central point of his letter a right conception of Jesus, his person, his power, his mission as redeemer from sin. He affirms that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the manifestation of God come in the flesh. Cerinthus was a leading opponent of John as we learn from Irenaeus in his account of the heresies of the early ages. Cerinthus held

that Jesus was the son of Joseph with whom the Logos united itself at the baptism, but left him at his sufferings on the cross. In Docetism there were the antagonizing forces of spirit and matter, matter being essentially sinful, not the handiwork of God the Creator. John declares that Jesus had come in the flesh and was a veritable partaker of human nature. To him nothing of sinfulness inhered in matter as such. John opposes not spirit to matter, but light to darkness, life to death, the fellowship with God to the world, truth to falsehood, the Son of God to the evil one. All these antagonisms are in the domain of the moral life. These false teachings call forth this Epistle and shape its form. We must read the letter in the light of the questions that in his day were the burning questions, the questions that were perplexing the minds of the faithful and perverting the beliefs of many. We do not find in this letter the same doctrinal defections that met Paul and called forth his writings; the Judaism that insisted on the permanency of the Jewish rites, that belittled Christ's work by exalting the position of Moses, does not present itself in this letter. The purpose of the Epistle is the perfection of personal holiness by a fellowship with the Father, the development of life and joy in the heart, the maintenance of sound teaching concerning the fundamentals of the faith, the holding fast to the persons of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, the Spirit. His conception of the Christian life is that of a joyous, overcoming life, assured of salvation, with no fear in view of the future, taught by the Holy Spirit, abiding in God, a life moved by a love that cared for others, a life in love with the truth. The term, church, is not once named, but in the background, and as one of the necessary presuppositions is the idea of the church. The conception here presented is that of a brotherhood in the light and life of God. There are no traces of any papacy, any priesthood with its grasping claims, no rites that carry in themselves salvation, but rather the insistence on the great truth of Protestantism, the universal church as controlled, influenced, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. He conceives of believers, all of them, as filled with the Holy Spirit (2 : 27; 3 : 24). John recognizes no distinctions among the membership but that of fathers and young men (2 : 12-14). In his view he and they alike are a community of sinners saved by grace, confessing their sins, yet sons of God, destined to be perfect, having the highest aims in life. He asserts the right of Christians to try the spirits, and all teachers and teachings that present themselves for their acceptance. While preeminently the teacher of love yet he, with James, insists that the Christian life be clothed with righteousness. Tender in spirit he speaks with words of condemnation for the life that asserts its fellowship with God, and yet is lived in ungodliness (1 : 6). With Paul he declares that love must be united with faith, a faith that rests on the work and person of Christ, a faith that overcomes (5 : 1-4).

#### THE STYLE.

The letter on the surface appears to be a series of disjointed meditations, in which the thoughts are turned over and over again as in a reverie, rather than a letter with a clearly marked purpose. This has been ascribed to the childishness of old age, an old age that has lost its vigor of mind and continues to brood

over the thoughts that have been precious to the heart. This seeming repetition may rather be ascribed to a Hebraic cast of mind, imbued with the spirit of Hebrew poetry that delights to dwell upon a thought and turn it over in an ever-varying aspect. One occasion for the charge of monotony arises from the apparent repetition of the same thought. But it must be noted that the author never presents the same thought in precisely the same way a second time. We find an illustration of John's method of thinking and writing in 1 : 1, 2, 3. In the first verse we have certain clear and definite statements; in the second verse we have the same statements, but with the added testimony of John; in the third verse the statements of the first verse, but with the new statement of the purpose of the letter. There is here progress in the thought all the while.

Another occasion of difficulty in this letter arises from John's neglect to use connecting words. Where Paul in his writings would make use of for, because, inasmuch, consequently, John simply puts statements side by side and allows the reader to make his own inferences. The very simplicity of the style creates a difficulty. The letter revolves around a few thoughts, life, love, light, righteousness, fellowship. Sometimes a difficulty arises from his changing from one expression to another of kindred import. To be begotten of God, to be a child of God, to be in fellowship with God, to walk in the light, to love the truth, all have the same import to John. Life, love, righteousness, and light are interchangeable terms. Sin, unrighteousness, and death are all terms of kindred import. To share in the life of God is to live a life of love; to be begotten of God is to walk in holiness and to share in God's fellowship; the fellowship with God is to be in the range of experience, of assured knowledge. They present different shades of the same thought.

Bearing in mind the marks of John's style the book becomes intelligible. We cannot understand this letter without remembering that John everywhere moves in the region of the ideal, the complete. He is describing things and persons, not as they actually are in their present aspects and limitations, but as they are in the divine command and conception, as they will be when they come to completeness. John writes not of love which exists among us as an imperfect thing, but of a perfect love (2 : 5; 4 : 18). He describes the condition of the child of God as without sin (5 : 18); he describes the Christian as one begotten of God, and therefore as free from error (2 : 27); he declares that the Christian cannot sin because of his relationship to God (3 : 6); the Christian is as one that has overcome the evil one, the victory already is obtained (5 : 4); Christian love will lead to a voluntary death for others (3 : 16); there is a complete unworldliness (2 : 15); the believer has all the knowledge that is essential, he is not immature in his conception of things (2 : 20); the one who does sin is of Satan (3 : 8); the Christian does the things that are well pleasing to God, has full confidence, is prayerful, is mature in holiness of conduct, and in the knowledge of the truth. John is not alone in writing of the Christian life in this ideal way. In Rom. 6 : 1-4 Paul declares that the Christian in his baptism has asserted his death to sin, his burial, his utter separation from his old life, his resurrection to a new life. After describing this resurrection life as the abiding state of the believer, he exhorts the same believer to put to death the

sinful deeds of his life (*Rom. 8:13*). That John does not intend these terms to be taken as an exact description of the actual life is evident from the confession of himself as a sinner (*1:8; 3:21*). He speaks of caring for the weak brothers, with the intimation that there are many of them (*5:16*). Great errors will arise if we take John's ideal description of the Christian life as the portrayal of what it is at present. If the Christian life is sinless, then it follows that much which has been regarded as sin is not really sin. A person can be regarded as sinless only by lowering the nature, narrowing the extent, and denying the spirituality of the moral law.

#### ITS WIDE RANGE OF TEACHING.

We find in a small compass almost the entire range of New Testament teachings. The practical duties of life are not ignored—the duty of prayer, of brotherly love, of personal righteousness. The letter stands out, in a pre-eminent way, as the Epistle of love. All obedience must spring from love. The atonement is the foundation of self-sacrifice (*3:16*). The cross in the life of Jesus creates the cross in the life of the Christian ; God, in his triune nature, Father, Son, Spirit; evil in the universe and in man ; the personal existence of Satan ; the person of Christ the redeemer, uniting in himself the divine and the human ; righteousness, sonship, sanctification, the personal coming of the Lord Jesus, all these doctrines are clearly taught in this short letter.

#### THE PLACE AND DATE OF THE LETTER.

It is not known at what place it was written, though the ancient tradition and the general view of most writers is that it was probably written from Ephesus. There is no indication in the letter itself that gives any means for determining the date of the writing. The "last time" mentioned in *2:18* is too indefinite an expression to furnish a chronological date. The absence of any reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent destruction of the Jewish State, suggests that that catastrophe had long since past. It was a period of quietness inasmuch as there are no allusions to persecutions either as present or impending. We cannot think of John as entering on his labors in Ephesus and Asia Minor until after the death of Paul. This would bring us down to A. D. 66 at least. It would require some years for John to assume and assert the position manifest in this letter. He writes with the consciousness of an admitted authority as one who for years had been spiritual leader and father. The church is here portrayed as something mature and well ordered. The heresies would require years for their development. Everything points to a period near to the close of the first century. It is altogether probable that the year A. D. 90 would satisfy all the conditions. Meyer's Commentary gives its conclusion in these words : "An unbiased consideration of all the circumstances renders it probable that John wrote this epistle during the last quarter of the apostolic age." Professor Ramsay puts it A. D. 90-100.

As to its relation to the Gospel it cannot be regarded as a companion document or as an appendix to the Gospel. But it is evident that the Epistle is entirely independent. Another class of readers is addressed, a new order of

circumstances had arisen, and a new development of false teachings. The Epistle speaks of the "manifestation" of Christ, of "the day of judgment," of "the last time," of the presence of "many antichrists." This indicates a later date, though not a different author. There are in the Epistle new conceptions of the Logos, the propitiation, the nature and penalty of sin. It is probable that the Gospel was written before the letter. As a rule, the briefer form of a statement by the same author is the later. Westcott says that the Epistle presupposes the Gospel either as a writing or as an oral instruction. While there are numerous and striking resemblances between the two there are characteristic differences. The Gospel dwells on the divine glory of Jesus, the Epistle emphasizes the rather his true humanity.

#### TO WHOM WRITTEN.

There can be no question that this writing has the character of a letter, though lacking something of the form of similar writings in the New Testament. The absence of the epistolary form is noticeable both at its beginning and close. In the body of the letter there are more epistolary hints than in any other book of the New Testament. The word "write," in its different forms, occurs fourteen times. The terms "to you," "in you," "you," the terms of direct address, occur thirty-six times. The terms "children," "little children," occur ten times. The term "beloved" occurs six times. Everything indicates a letter sent to those endeared to him by years of spiritual fellowship. It might be called an encyclical letter, the inscription of which would be different for every church to which it was sent. The entire writing rests on a living and personal relation between the writer and the reader. It remains for all the ages a model of appeal from an aged pastor to his fold. In it tenderness for his readers is united with an absorbing love for the truth, and all the great teachings of the Christian revelation are affirmed in a strong yet incidental way.

#### THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER.

This letter differs from many of the New Testament writings in that it appears to have no orderly development of thought. Two mistakes may be made, one that there is not found in it any orderly movement of thought, the other finding in it a too minute analysis. The Epistle may be analyzed as follows:

#### INTRODUCTION 1 : 1-4.

#### I. THE NATURE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, 1 : 5-2 : 29.

To have fellowship with God means, on the human side, a walking with God. This may be looked at in two aspects, inclusive and exclusive.

##### 1. What walking in the light includes, 1 : 5-2 : 14.

The keyword of this section is, "God is light" (1:5).

(1) It includes a fellowship with God and with the brother, 1 : 5-7.

(2) It includes a sense of sin and the confession of sin, 1 : 8-10.

(3) It includes an aiming at sinlessness, but not despondent when failures come, 2 : 1, 2.

(4) The test of a life that walks in the light is the doing of God's will, 2 : 3-6.

(5) A test of a life that walks in the light is a love for the brother, 2 : 7-11.

(6) The forgiveness of sins in the past is a reason for walking in the light, 2 : 12-14.

2. What walking in the light excludes, 2 : 15-29.

(1) Walking in the light excludes worldliness, 2 : 15-17.

(2) Walking in the light excludes antichrists from having a control over the life, 2 : 18, 19.

(3) Walking in the light excludes spiritual blindness on the part of the believer, the spiritual anointing should protect from the deceivers, 2 : 20-29.

## II. THE RESULT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS HOLINESS, 3 : 1-4 : 6.

The keyword of this section is, "He is pure" (3 : 3). As God's light makes light in men, so God's holiness creates a holiness in men.

1. The high destiny of the children of God and the duty of keeping themselves pure, 3 : 1-8.

2. Holiness is the test of the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil, 3 : 9-13.

3. A mark of holiness will be a love for each other, 3 : 14-18.

4. The confidence begotten by the holy life, 3 : 19-24.

5. A test of holiness will be a love for the truth, 4 : 1-6.

## III. LOVE SPRINGS FROM FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, 4 : 7-21.

The key-word of this section is, "God is love" (4 : 8).

1. Love is the test of being begotten of God, 4 : 7-11.

2. Because God is love we must love each other. Love to others gives the assurance of sonship, 4 : 12-16.

3. God's nature is love. The realization of this dispels fear, 4 : 17-21.

## IV. THE RELATION OF FAITH TO LOVE, TO THE OVERCOMING LIFE, TO ASSURANCE, 5 : 1-21.

The key-word of this section is, "Our faith" (5 : 4).

1. A belief in the Messiahship of Jesus leads to life of love, 5 : 1-3.

2. Faith in Jesus leads to an overcoming life, 5 : 4, 5.

3. The testimony by which the believer is assured that Jesus is the Son of God, 5 : 6-13.

4. Faith in God's promises leads to prevailing prayer, 5 : 14-17.

5. The assured beliefs of the Christian life, 5 : 18-21.

## SECOND AND THIRD JOHN

These two letters in size, form, general spirit, and structure much resemble each other. Both may therefore be considered at the same time.

### I. THEIR AUTHORSHIP AND APOSTOLIC CHARACTER.

A few persons of the Tubingen school of thought deny that any one of the three letters attributed to John was written by him. But inasmuch as this school denies any supernatural element in the Scriptures, and gives no weight to the testimony of the church Fathers, little consideration need be given to its opinions. A second view is that while the first letter was written by John the apostle, the second and third letters were written by another known as John the presbyter. This view is founded on the expression occurring in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1, "John the elder." It is maintained by them that John the apostle would not have written of himself in this manner. Papias, born A. D. 70, regards this John as different from the John who wrote the first Epistle. But it is to be noted that John seldom mentions himself, and never mentions his apostolic authority. If it is conceded that John the apostle wrote these two letters his use of the term, elder, may be explained by the usage of his fellow apostles. Paul speaks of himself as "Paul, the aged," which means literally, Paul, the elder (*Philemon* 9). In like manner Peter styles himself "a fellow elder" (1 Peter 5:1). The apostolate was the highest office in the New Testament church, embracing in itself all the subordinate positions. It is difficult to conceive that any other person, in that age, would have a style so in harmony with that of John. The internal resemblances, binding all three letters together, show that one and the same man wrote them all. Origen, A. D. 185, and Eusebius, A. D. 300, refer to these two letters as suspected by many, but apparently without sharing these doubts themselves. Among those quoting from them are Irenaeus, A. D. 190, Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 200, Cyprian, A. D. 257, Dionysius, A. D. 250. At the time of the Reformation Erasmus questioned the apostolic authorship of these letters. It ought to be expected that in familiar, personal letters unusual expressions would be found. The very fact of their small size, their personal character, the absence of any great theological discussions would naturally account for their omission from some lists of the accepted books of the New Testament. Their comparative unimportance kept them out of the range of discussion and controversy. We may therefore regard them as the productions of John the apostle. That they have a common origin and a common spirit is the view of almost all modern commentators. See Huther's Introduction to Meyer's Commentary. See also B. F. Westcott's valuable collations of Johannine terms and phrases in his "Epistles of St. John," with notes and essays, second edition, London, 1886; also Plummer, Cambridge Bible, Introduction to Second and Third Epistles.

## II. FOR WHOM WRITTEN AND WHY.

The second letter has this peculiarity among the New Testament writings, it alone was sent to a household. It was thought by some in the early ages, among them Jerome, A. D. 400, that John was writing to the universal Christian church, describing it by the term "lady." But we are not justified in attributing to John such a mystical mode of expression. A comparison of the Introductions of the second and third letters will show that John must be writing to an individual, a Christian mother and her household.

In the third letter Gaius, a person of high standing in the church, is addressed. This name is exceedingly common. It is not possible to indicate definitely the person addressed or his place of residence. All the New Testament writings were called forth by some emergency. These letters, while full of personal devotion, were written to combat errors. False teachers (<sup>2</sup> John 7) abounded, seeking in public ways and in households to pervert the truth and to seduce believers. Their teachings attacked the fundamentals of the faith, the character and work of Christ, the denial of the fact and possibility of an incarnation, the denial of the reality of the human life of Christ (<sup>3</sup> John 7). John puts himself on the side of the truth and the good men and women in the churches, and recognizes the bad principles at work in the false teachers (<sup>3</sup> John 11).

## III. DOCTRINAL TEACHINGS CONTAINED IN THE LETTERS.

These letters throw light upon the practical duties of Christian hospitality, and the needful missionary activity of the church. We see the well-ordered Christian household (<sup>2</sup> John 4); the turbulent Diotrephes, the faithful Gaius, the steadfast Demetrius, the majority of the church arrayed on the side of evil or cowed by Diotrephes. We see here revealed God the Father, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the grace and peace of God, his mercy toward sinners, the supreme authority of Jesus, and his unique relation to the Father. There is a development of thought in the three letters. In the first no mention is made of the church, though it is implied that there was an organization out of which the false teachers went (<sup>1</sup> John 2 : 19). The emphasis is laid in the first letter on the personal Christian life. In the second letter the household appears, there is the family piety. In the third the church appears, the organized household of believers for work and worship. These two letters, while seemingly unimportant, have many important doctrinal teachings and much wholesome counsel for the after ages.

## IV. TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING.

It is probable, from the similarity of the two letters, that they were written about the same time. The journeys mentioned in 2 John 12 and 3 John 14 may be one and the same journey. Alford thinks that both letters were the product of the later portion of his life, probably subsequent to the writing of the Apocalypse. As to the place of writing probability points to Ephesus. Ramsay shows how full the first century was of correspondence.

## CONTENTS AND ANALYSIS OF 2 JOHN.

This letter reveals the heart of the tender Christian man, the wise counselor, the earnest defender of the faith, and the personal friend. The analysis is as follows:

- I. The address and greeting, ver. 1-3.
- II. The body of the letter, ver. 4-11.
  1. He expresses his joy at beholding the walk of her children, ver. 4.
  2. He unfolds the law of Christian love, ver. 5, 6.
  3. He puts her on her guard against false teachers, ver. 7-9.
  4. He indicates the method of dealing with errorists, ver. 10.
- III. The conclusion. The hope that he may soon see her, ver. 12, 13.

## CONTENTS AND ANALYSIS OF 3 JOHN.

This brief personal letter throws a flood of light upon the closing part of John's life and the close of the first century. There is revealed a struggle on the part of John and the church for the supremacy of the truth over manifold dangerous errors. The care of all the churches rested on men like John (2 Cor. 11:28). The letter shows how Christianity was spread by correspondence and by personal visitation—the churches were missionary organizations. The analysis is as follows:

- I. The address, ver. 1.
- II. The substance of the letter, ver. 2-12.
  1. A prayer that Gaius may prosper, ver. 2-4.
  2. Praise of Gaius for his hospitality toward missionaries, ver. 5-8.
  3. The hostility of Diotrephes, a leading man in the church, ver. 9, 10.
  4. Fellowship must be had with the good, ver. 11, 12.
- III. The conclusion. He hopes soon to see Gaius, ver. 13, 14.

## JUDE

### ITS PLACE IN THE CANON.

Eusebius in his church history, A. D. 324-340, places this letter among the six or seven books which were considered doubtful, as not everywhere received. This is a proof that, being finally admitted, its admission was not made without full consideration. The objections against it were that it was, to a large extent, unknown to the churches in the East. It was also a matter of doubt whether a book that was written by one not an apostle, or under the direction of an apostle, ought to be placed among the recognized writings to be read in the churches. Others thought that the existence in it of a quotation from an admittedly apocryphal book precluded its admission. It was said that if the author did not know that the book of Enoch was apocryphal, he could not be inspired, and if he had been inspired he would not quote from it. The very brevity of the letter would also everywhere militate against any large knowledge of it. The Gentile churches would not be attracted to it because it is cast in an eminently Jewish mold, its quotations being largely from the Old Testament. Comp. Vedder, "Our New Testament. How Did We Get It?" p. 195 f.

Tertullian (born about A. D. 150) cites from it as an authentic writing, although he regards it as written by the Apostle Jude. Clement of Alexandria (born about A. D. 150) quotes from it as a part of the holy Scriptures. The Muratorian fragment, about A. D. 170, speaks of this letter as genuine and worthy of a place in the canon. The other lists of the Scripture books, the Laodicean, A. D. 363, and the Carthaginian, 397, contain it. Origen (born A. D. 185) has quotations from it. The oldest copies of the Peshito version, made in the second century, do not contain it, but Ephrem the Syrian (born about A. D. 304) accepts it. Zahn says that about A. D. 200 it was accepted "in the churches of all lands round the Mediterranean Sea." In recent years it has been regarded, almost universally, as authentic.

We may regard it as certain that it was written in the first century, for it would not have met with such a general acceptance had it appeared in a later age. Had a forger written it he would not have chosen for its reputed author one not everywhere regarded as an apostle, nor would he have quoted so slavishly from a former writing—that of Second Peter. It has been well said that for so short a writing to be alluded to so frequently and quoted from so extensively, especially when not the universally recognized writing of an apostle, is remarkable. When we remember that the first century had means for determining the authorship of a letter that we do not possess, we may well join in their verdict arrived at after mature consideration that the letter is and ought to be in the New Testament. If, however, any letter is rejected, this does not impair the worth of the admitted letters.

## WHO WAS THE WRITER?

We are fully justified in believing that this letter is a product of the apostolic age, written by a person known as Judas or Jude as in the received version. What Judas is meant? But two persons can, at all, claim consideration in connection with the authorship of this letter: (1) Judas, not Iscariot (*John 14:22*), an apostle called Thaddeus or Lebbæus in Matt. 10:3 and Mark 3:18, called also Judas (the son) of James in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:3; (2) Judas the brother of our Lord, one of the four brothers mentioned in Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3. By some these have been identified. The Authorized version gives the weight of its authority to this view by its rendering of the expression "Judas of James" (*Luke 6:16; Acts 1:3*), "Judas the brother of James" instead of "Judas the son of James," as it ought to be rendered, and as it everywhere else is rendered. Tertullian and Augustine speak of the author of this letter as an apostle, but against this are several considerations. Had he been an apostle he would naturally have appealed to his official position as an apostle to give weight to his denunciation of false teachers. Paul did this even when well known as a writer, after he had written his great letters. How much more would a comparatively unknown man like Judas need all the weight of influence given by his apostleship. In ver. 17 he compares himself with the apostles, urging his readers to remember the words of the apostles. We may conclude that he was not the apostle bearing that name. It remains only to consider the case of Judas the brother of the Lord. Writing to Jewish Christians he would find no relationship more helpful to him than kinship to the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. The general consensus of opinion favors this Judas as the author of the letter. Both James and Judas had a strong Jewish caste of belief, while holding to salvation through the Lord Jesus.

Of the author personally we know almost nothing. At first he was not a believer in the claims of Jesus (*John 7:5*); afterward he became a follower of the Christ (*Acts 1:14*). From 1 Cor. 9:5 we know that he was married. In the reign of Domitian, A. D. 81, according to Ensebius, two of his grandsons were arrested on the charge that they were of the family of David. On showing their hands hard with toil they were released. Neither James nor Jude claims relationship with the glorified Jesus; the chasm between them was too great; reverence would forbid such a claim.

## WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN AND FOR WHOM?

The time of writing will, to a large extent, be determined by the consideration of the relation that this letter bears to 2 Peter. This letter from ver. 3 to ver. 18 is parallel in thought and expression with 2 Peter 2:1-18. These two writers must have been in communication with each other at the time of writing, or both quoted from some common source, or the one must have quoted from the other. It is impossible to decide which writing is entitled to priority in time. If Peter wrote first and the quotation is made from the apostle then this letter may have been written as late as A. D. 75, in which year Zahn places

it. If, on the other hand, this letter was written first, and Peter quotes from it, then it must have been written about A. D. 65, inasmuch as Peter died about A. D. 68. Alford says: "Of the place where the Epistle was written we know absolutely nothing." It is probable that it was addressed to the same circle of readers to whom Peter sent his letter, the believers resident in Asia Minor. Others conjecture that the marked similarity in tone and expression make it probable that it would be addressed to other readers, perhaps those living in Palestine or Egypt. Nothing definite can be affirmed on these points.

#### PECULIARITIES OF THE LETTER.

The number of words and expressions used nowhere else in the New Testament is remarkable. Farrar, in his "Early Days of Christianity," cites eighteen such words and expressions as found in this short letter. Other words found here and in 2 Peter are exceedingly rare. The style of the Epistle is that of a man struggling to express himself in a language with which he was not familiar. The coloring and style remind one of the Hebrew prophets in whose writings the author was trained in his home at Nazareth. The arrangement of the statements and facts of the Epistle in groups of three is noticeable. The entire letter is constructed on this plan. The author is "Judas," a "servant," a "brother." Those addressed are "called," "beloved" and "kept." He prays that "mercy," "peace," and "love" may be theirs. The wicked men are "ungodly," "turning," "denying." Those punished are "Israelites," "angels," "cities of the plain." Their sins are "defilement," "setting at naught," "railing." The men whom they pattern after are "Cain," "Balaam," "Korah." The false teachers "make separations," "are sensual," "not having the spirit." The believers are exhorted to build themselves up, pray, and look for the mercy of the Lord. Three classes of persons are to be dealt with. All time is divided into three parts, past, present, future. A like arrangement is that of the acrostic Psalms in the Old Testament. The letter is severe in the style of the Old Testament prophets, but withal has a tender spirit toward the believer, and the timid and fainting child of God. It is unequalled in its arraignment of the ungodly in their fixed and contagious wickedness.

#### THE LETTER AND THE APOCRYPHAL WRITINGS.

The first century was full of writings, apocryphal in their character, dealing very largely in descriptions of the unseen life, grotesque and absurd, having predictions also concerning the future. Some of these perhaps were written before the beginning of the Christian era, or in its early years. It has been strenuously held by some that the author quotes in ver. 9 from the Assumption of Moses, the incident concerning Michael and Satan; also in ver. 14 from the book of Enoch. It cannot be proved, however, that he quotes from these writings. This letter is a message for the times, called forth by the lawlessness, the factional spirit, the sensual character of the false teachings whereby the gospel of Christ was made a cover for licentiousness and lust. The denial of Jesus Christ and his teachings always makes for falsity in belief and wickedness in conduct.

## CONTENTS.

This letter is catholic in character, having much in common with 2 Peter. Its special object seems to have been to guard Christians against certain false teachers who merited the severest punishment, and to arouse Christians to contend for the faith as delivered to them by the apostles. Analysis:

- I. Salutation and prayer of Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, ver. 1, 2.
- II. Design of the letter and reason for writing it, ver. 3, 4.
- III. Examples of God's punitive justice, ver. 5-7.
  1. Unbelievers destroyed in the wilderness.
  2. Fallen angels.
  3. Sodom and Gomorrah.
- IV. Ungodly teachers fully described in their own nature, by comparison with Old Testament types and as portrayed in prophecy, ver. 8-19.
  1. The sins of these false teachers resemble the three typically ungodly men of Old Testament times, Cain, Balaam, Korah, ver. 8-11.
  2. The ungodly described not by contrast with others, but as they are in themselves, ver. 12, 13.
  3. Prophecy through Enoch testifies to their ungodliness and predicts their punishment, ver. 14, 16.
  4. The ungodly described as mockers, sensual, schismatics, ver. 17-19.
- V. Words of counsel for the believing element in the churches. To be firm in the faith, help the doubting, reclaim the erring, oppose the wicked, ver. 20-23.
- VI. The doxology, ver. 24, 25.

# THE REVELATION (APOCALYPSE) OF JOHN

## ITS APOCALYPTIC CHARACTER.

The mold into which the Revelation of John is cast is apocalyptic. As literature it is the finest and best of its kind. Like all apocalyptic literature it is distinguished for its language painting, its symbols, its imagery and figures of speech. It is both poetic and dramatic.

The beginnings of apocalyptic literature extend far into the past. Apocalyptic passages occur in the Pentateuch (*Gen. 15:12-17; 49:21; Num. chap. 23, 24*), in the historical books (*1 Kings 22:17-23*), in the prophets (*Isa. chap. 13, 14 f.; 24, 25 f.; 65:17 b; Joel 3:9-17; Zech. chap. 1-8*). Ezekiel is largely apocalyptic. But it found its highest realization in the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel. Thus Ezekiel and Daniel are kindred in structure with the Revelation of John.

In the century preceding and the one following the founding of Christianity, was a group of apocalyptic writings that had wide circulation, and made a deep impression upon early Christians. Among these were the book of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, the book of Jubilees, Apocalypse of Ezra, of Baruch, of Abraham, Testaments of the Patriarchs, and others of less note. This literature was Jewish in origin and cultivation, but it continued as such only about a generation after the destruction of Jerusalem. It passed over into Christian thought and found its masterpiece in the Revelation of John.

Apocalyptic writings appear to have originated and flourished in troublous times. They would solve the problem of the sufferings of Israel or the persecution of God's people, and inspire hope, comfort, and joy in the midst of their trials with the prospect of future deliverance and victory. Their message was thus especially for their own times, yet helpful in other days and in times like their own. A true apocalypse would use such symbols and treat current events in a way that would be intelligible to the age when written. In such a sense the Revelation of John was a tract for the times, dealing with historic events understood by the spiritually minded. Under the leading of the Holy Spirit there would be a wider horizon to such as had an ear to hear. It is admirably adapted to encourage the people of God in times of persecution and distress, with the sure prospect of final salvation and glory. And such it must continue to be until its full and final fulfilment.

While the book of Revelation is apocalyptic in character it is also epistolary. It is addressed to the seven churches of Asia with a message to each. It has also the epistolary beginning and ending (*1:4; 22:21*). Moreover it has the prophetic element (*1:3; 10:11; 22:7, 10, 18, 19*). Whatever the theory and method of interpretation, this is too important to be overlooked. Its writer too must be regarded as the actual person he professes to be. "In no single instance," says Swete, "do the non-canonical apocalyptic writings write in their own names;

their message is delivered under the assumed personality of some one of the saintly or inspired teachers of the past." But not so with John the revelator. He writes under his own name to churches existing at that time, from a well-known island (1 : 4, 9). The visions too were actually seen by him, and were not the creations of an excited imagination. He distinctly declares, "And I, John, am he who heard and saw these things" (22 : 8).

The writer of Revelation shows great familiarity with the Old Testament. Not only does he use its symbolical imagery and numbers, such as seven, twelve, ten, and four, but much of his language is made up of words, phrases, and informal quotations from the Jewish Scriptures. According to a list of quotations at the end of Westcott and Hort's second volume of their Greek New Testament, of the four hundred and four verses of Revelation, two hundred and seventy-eight contain over five hundred references to the Old Testament. "He refers to the book of Daniel in some forty-five places, . . . and the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah are used with almost equal frequency, while the other prophets, the Psalter, and the Pentateuch, are often in view. No book of the New Testament is so thoroughly steeped in the thought and imagery of the Hebrew Scriptures" (SWETE, p. xl ix). The author of Revelation seems to have been familiar with the uncanonical apocalypses of his time, especially with the book of Enoch. He has many similar thoughts and expressions. But as Swete wisely says (p. cl iij): "The most that can be safely affirmed is that he shared with the Jewish apocalypticists the stock of apocalyptic imagery and mystical and eschatological thought which was the common property of an age nurtured in the Old Testament and hard pressed by the troubles and dangers of the times."

The *divine influence* under which John wrote is another factor to be considered. Without this in mind this brief consideration of the book would be incomplete. It was "the revelation of Jesus Christ" which was committed to John as "the word of God" and "words of prophecy." It was "in the Spirit" that he heard and saw and was commanded to write. The greatness and glory of the message accords with his commission. Many passages in the book bear the mark of the inspiring Spirit; moreover the gulf that separates the Revelation of John from the uncanonical apocalypses indicates that the former was not an evolution of the latter, but that it was written by one indued with the Spirit of God. In saying this it is not meant that the human element was not largely present. Indeed, John appears in the full exercise of his mental powers. But he wrote as one fully ablaze with his subject. He evidently did not quietly select his symbols and Scripture thoughts and references. In his spiritual uplift the words and phrases of the Old Testament were at his ready command. He did not write as an artist. He is dramatic without aiming at the drama. He is poetic without attempting a poem. Notwithstanding grammatical defects and rhetorical faults, his work stands forth as the masterpiece of apocalyptic writing, and holds a high place in the world's literature.

Such considerations also tend to prove the *unity* of the book, and that it is not the product, as some scholars have maintained, of two or more authors. Its words, phrases, symbols, style, and Old Testament phraseology witness

against a composite authorship. After a prolonged and critical examination, Swete expresses the conviction that "the Apocalypse of John is a literary unity. . . Everywhere the same creative mind has made itself felt, and features, which at first sight appeared to be foreign to the writer's purpose, were found on nearer view to be necessary to the development of his plan" (p. xl ix f.).

#### AUTHORSHIP AND GENUINENESS.

The early church was of the almost unanimous opinion that the book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John. Papias, a hearer of John, born about A. D. 70, a bishop of Hierapolis, a city near Laodicea (*Rev. 3:14*) made use of the book in a work published about A. D. 130. Justin Martyr, writing about A. D. 150 in Ephesus, mentions the *Revelation* as a work of John. Irenaeus, writing about A. D. 180, refers to this book over thirty times, and quotes it as the work of John. The Fathers of the Eastern Church, Apollonius of Ephesus, Theophilus of Antioch, Clemens Alexandrinus, Hippolytus of Rome, bear united testimony to John's authorship. Eusebius, in his church history, presents the traditions of the Eastern churches to John's authorship. Among them all there is only the one conjecture of Dionysius that perhaps John did not write the book. The early Latin Fathers give clear and unanimous testimony to the apostolic authorship of the *Apocalypse*. Swete notes that of the nine hundred and thirteen words used in *Revelation*, four hundred and sixteen are found also in the *Gospel*; that there is a considerable number of unusual constructions common to both books, and that the style, differing greatly, has many points of resemblance both in regard to sentence formation and the phrasing of thoughts. He also states the fact that early tradition explicitly states that "the *Gospel* was written from dictation, and underwent some kind of revision at the hands of those who received it." The two books also resemble each other in the doctrinal position that Jesus is the universal Lord, the Lamb whose death brings salvation, and who has universal rule. The author of *Revelation* is also a veritable "Son of Thunder."

Harnack attributes the authorship of John's *Gospel* and the *Revelation* to John the Presbyter, the former not written later than A. D. 110, the latter from 93-96, but being a revision of one or more underlying Jewish *Apocalypses*. Porter holds substantially the same view in Hastings' "Bible Dictionary." But Ramsay, in his recently published "Letters to the Seven Churches," attributes the authorship to John the apostle. He says: "It is a psychological impossibility that these letters to the Asian churches could have been written except by one who felt himself, and had the right to feel himself, charged with the superintendence and oversight of all those churches" (p. 80). Concerning the time, he says: "The tradition that connects his punishment with Domitian is too strong" (p. 85).

The right of this book to a place in the canon is satisfactory. The Muratorian fragment (A. D. 175) gives it an undoubted place among the received New Testament books. There is abundant evidence that it was in circulation during the second half of the second century, not only in Asia, but in the West. But there arose objections to it, and its general acceptance was long delayed.

"Its claims are great (1:1-3; 22:16, 18, 19), and it was probably treasured as the most sacred of books by those who first received it. But it did not hold its place in the East, and its reception into the canon was secured only by the advocacy of the Western Church. The Greek mind naturally favored a more ethical and rational type of Christianity, and always opposed the millenarian ideas that appealed to this book for support. Eusebius records the objections to it, and seems to sympathize with them; and the book was not found in the original Syriac New Testament. But the Western Church accepted it after an elaborate defense by Hippolytus, about A. D. 215, and the Eastern Church finally yielded to the West" (PORTER). "Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers," p. 190 f. Comp. Vedder, "Our New Testament."

#### DATE OF WRITING.

Two conflicting theories are held, many modern commentators maintaining that it was written about A. D. 68. In favor of this view it is urged that there is no reference in the book to the destruction of Jerusalem, which would have been alluded to as a judgment of God had it taken place before the book was written; that the beast of Rev. 13:1, 18; 17:3, 8-11 refers to the Emperor Nero reigning at that time; that the literary differences between this book and the Gospel demand a long period of time between them. In favor of the later date (A. D. 93-95) is the clear external testimony of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, a contemporary of John himself, whose words preserved in Eusebius are that the Apocalypse "was seen by the apostle no long time ago, but almost in our generation, about the end of the reign of Domitian." The first three centuries had no other view than this. In favor of the later date is the degeneracy shown in the seven churches, much greater than is manifest in Paul's letter to the Ephesians and the letters of Peter. John's intimate relations to these churches bear testimony to a later date. During Paul's lifetime they would naturally look to him as their founder. After his death John would naturally become their spiritual guide.

Alford says: "With every desire to search and prove all things, and ground faith on things proved, I own I am quite unable to come to the conclusion of any of the maintainers of the Neronian, or any of the earlier dates. The book itself refuses the assignment of any such times of writing. The evident assumption which it makes of long-continued persecution (6:9) forbids us to place it in the very first persecution, and that only a partial one. I have no hesitation in believing, with the ancient fathers and most competent witnesses, that it was written about 96 or 97."

Westcott, Lightfoot, and Hort hold to the earlier date. Ramsay regards it as of slow growth until it took its present form, that "it was not the vision of a day; it embodied the contemplation and the insight of years," that the "point of view is the moment when the apostle was snatched from the world and sent into banishment." But this is an assumption, which is contrary to the impression which the Revelation naturally makes upon its readers. Professor Porter, in his "Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers" (p. 190), concludes that the date "about, if not exactly, A. D. 93, remains the probable one for the book

as it stands." Professor Bousset, in "Encyclopædia Biblica," also dates Revelation near the close of the first century.

Swete, in "The Apocalypse of St. John" (p. c), holds the later date (90-96), and says: "This date appears to be consistent with the general character and purpose of the book. The Apocalypse, as a whole, presupposes a period when in Asia, at least, the church was compelled to choose between Christ and Cæsar. And the prophet foresees that this is no local or passing storm, but one which will spread over the whole empire, and run a long course, ending only with the fall of paganism and of Rome. The coming of the Lord is no longer with the fall of Jerusalem, which is viewed as an event of past history. A new Jerusalem has taken the place of the old city of God, and the apocalyptic can already see its ideal glories revealed. But for the moment Babylon is in the foreground of the picture, and Babylon must fall before the end, and after Babylon the beast and the false prophet. Even the triumph that follows on their destruction is not final, for the dragon remains to be overcome. So the coming is postponed indefinitely, though the old watchword, 'Behold, I come quickly,' still rings in our ears. The whole standpoint is that of the closing years of the first century, when the church knew herself to be entering upon a struggle of which she could not foresee the end, although of the victorious issue she entertained no doubt." The discussion may be summed up thus: Thirty years ago the majority of scholars held or inclined to the earlier date; but since then, as a result of more thorough investigation, the common opinion has returned to the later date, the closing years of the reign of Domitian.

#### TO WHOM ADDRESSED AND WHY.

The Revelation of John is addressed to seven churches of Asia, and through them to other churches in the province and elsewhere. These seven churches, as Professor Ramsay points out, are named in the order that a messenger would take in conveying "the letter (perhaps in so many distinct copies) to the central cities of the various provinces" (p. 183). It was a book for the times, written to comfort and sustain a suffering church. It is predictive in that in general terms it unfolds the future. And so its design, in a fuller sense, is to encourage the people of God between the close of direct revelation and the second coming of the Lord. The book plainly reveals a superintending power of God in the world, the downfall of all opposition, the sovereignty of Christ, as an ever-present Christ in the affairs of the world. When the conflicts have all closed, after the lapse of centuries, there is beheld the conquering Christ and his church. If any one is in doubt as to the interpretation of particular portions, there can be no doubt as to the general impression made on the mind of the reader.

There is, however, a wide contrast between the book and a history which simply records dates and events. This book represents God as acting in behalf of his people, over all agencies in nature. Over all the movements in the centuries by the great world forces stands the controlling providence of God. It might have been an open question when Christianity started on its mission, how it would succeed in such a world as this. The answer is found here that against

brute force, against apostasies in faith, against false philosophy, Christianity would come out a conquering cause.

This book occupies a unique doctrinal place in the New Testament. It alone clearly reveals the overthrow of evil as an organized agency, the overthrow of Satan, the providence of God working in large ways, the plans of God working steadily, the future triumph of Christianity in the earth. Under Hebrew figures, Oriental imagery, in visions, through numbers and symbolic acts, we see this cause advancing and ultimate triumph coming. To make the New Testament complete there was needed a book of this kind, teaching in direct statement or in symbol the triumph of Christianity. In this we recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

#### METHODS OF INTERPRETATION.

No book in the Bible has been so variously interpreted as the Revelation of John. Probably no book has been more misunderstood or more arbitrarily treated. Modesty and reserve, a prayerful and teachable spirit, are needed in considering and interpreting its contents. There are four main systems of interpretation now variously advocated.

1. The "Preterist" method finds the fulfilment of the book, except the last chapters, in the destruction of Jerusalem and in the history of pagan Rome during the first emperors. This is substantially the "Scientific" interpretation which has grown up during the last seventy-five years. Some refer it chiefly to the overthrow of the Jewish State, others chiefly to the conflict with heathen Rome, and still others to both. Bleek, De Wette, Stuart, Cowles, Farrar, Porter, Bousset hold to this theory.

2. The "Futurist" system maintains that the entire book, except the first three chapters, describes events that will occur in connection with the personal coming of our Lord. Seiss, Kelly, De Burgh, Todd, hold to this view.

3. The "Continuous Historical" theory regards the book as giving a continuous history of the church from the first century to the end of the age. Among the leaders of this method of interpretation are Luther, Bengel, Isaac Newton, Elliott, Alford, Barnes, Grattan Guinness. From the thirteenth century until recently this theory has had almost universal sway.

This class of interpreters, and others also, are divided into post-millenarians and pre-millenarians, according as they regard the millennium of chap. 20 as past or future. "Augustine committed the radical error of dating the millennium from the time of the Apocalypse or the beginning of the Christian era (although the seer mentioned it near the end of the book), and his view had great influence; hence the wide expectation of the end of the world at the close of the first millennium of the Christian church. Other post-millenarians date the millennium from the triumph of Christianity over paganism in Rome at the accession of Constantine the Great (311); still others (as Hengstenberg) from the conversion of the Germanic nations or the age of Charlemagne. All these calculations are refuted by events. The millennium of the Apocalypse must lie in the future, and is still an article of hope" (P. SCHAFF, "His. of Ch. Church," p. 839).

A good illustration of the continuous historical method is that of Rev. Moses Lowman in his "Notes on the Revelation of St. John," 1737 and 1745. This was largely followed by Dr. Philip Doddridge in his "Family Expositor" (Revelation, about 1750), and later was incorporated with Patrick, Lowth, and Whitby's Commentary (1807). Mr. Lowman divides the prophetic parts of this book into seven periods. The *first* represents, by the *seals*, the state of the church under the heathen Roman emperors from A. D. 95 to 323; the *second*, period of the *trumpets*, in its state from Constantine A. D. 337 to 750; *third*, period of the *vials*, its state in the times of the last head of Roman government, represented by the *beast* for one thousand two hundred and sixty years, from about A. D. 756 to 2016; the *fourth* period, the millennium from A. D. 2000 to 3005; *fifth* period, Satan loosed for a little season; *sixth* period, the resurrection and final judgment; *seventh* period, the heavenly state.

The fixing of these dates must be a matter of conjecture. Hence they differ in different authors. This is true of the starting-point of one thousand two hundred and sixty years (*Rev. 12:6*). Some would start as early as A. D. 533. Guinness, with many others since the sixteenth century, starts with the decree of Emperor Phocar, in A. D. 606-607, and find the fulfilment in the years 1866-1870, in the overthrow of papal Austria, of the imperial power of papal France, and the loss of the temporal sovereignty of the pope of Rome, which he had held for more than a thousand years.

But not only do the advocates of this theory differ largely among themselves, but often with themselves. With the progress of events they find new data, and their point of view changes, and they are compelled to make new applications or correct old ones. In a sense "history is the interpreter of prophecy." But there may be a too narrow and too brief a view of history, a lack of a true historical sense, or a deficiency in spiritual perception. A look into the past may help us. The Messianic and other predictions referred to and quoted in the Gospels and the Acts, were not fully understood till after their fulfilment. Indeed some of them were such that it would have been impossible, without divine illumination, to know their full meaning beforehand. May we not reasonably infer that the same may be true regarding the second coming of Christ and the predictions preceding that event, especially when they are given in symbolic language? Yet these prophecies were intended for God's people, to be heard, read, and understood sufficiently for their comfort, encouragement, and instruction (2:7; 13:18; 15:4; 22:7, 18).

4. Such considerations have led to the adoption of the "*spiritual*" method, of which Doctor Milligan is the best exponent. This method is not new. Ticonius in the fourth century used a spiritual interpretation, in his commentary on the Apocalypse, and it became the commonly accepted view for ten centuries until the Reformation. It has been revived by a number of able scholars of the past generation, and is a widely accepted view in Germany, England, and America. This system affirms that the book covers the entire period from the first century to the coming of Christ, but not dealing in definite events so much as in great principles. One may see in vision the conflicts, the degeneracy, the triumphs of the church. Milligan, Ebrard, Godet, Lee, Boyd Carpenter, and

Vaughan (1882) maintain this view. Bousset gives a historical survey of the interpretation of the book since the first century.

In a book of visions and symbols a literal interpretation is not possible. The books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, in the Old Testament, will throw light on Revelation. Large portions of these books are cast in the same mold as this book. The aim must be to find a rational and natural meaning for the symbol, and one that will hold good for the entire book, and will be in harmony with the Old Testament apocalyptic books. A knowledge of the non-canonical Jewish apocalypses will be helpful in showing a common stock of imagery with which John was familiar. But here one must be on his guard. As in the parable so in the apocalyptic vision there is the drapery which belongs to the scenery of the book, and must not be pressed in the interpretation. The book teaches the general principles that constitute God's revelation to men. It is also an apocalypse, an *uncovering* of what otherwise would be hidden. The one central thought of Revelation is—the ascended, glorified, crucified Christ so ruling among men that in time, despite opposition, his kingdom becomes established in the world, and earth and heaven touch each other. Like Daniel the Revelation is an unfolding of the meaning and end of the history of the world. The explanation of the Saviour's discourse in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew will give an illustration of the method to be adopted. In that chapter is a reference to an impending event, the destruction of Jerusalem, and then a widening horizon that reaches to the end of the world. Here also events that are near in time shadow forth events that will reach to the end of the ages. If we might judge beforehand how a revelation would be made we might surmise that a paradise lost in the Old Testament would be counterbalanced by a paradise regained in the New Testament. That historical characters and events of the seer's own time are referred to is generally accepted; the only question is whether there is any reference to the history of the church between the author's time and the still future consummation. That there is such a reference is maintained in this commentary.

Many questions touched upon in this introduction are further noticed as they arise in the commentary. See especially introductory note to Chap. VI. and Note II., p. 255.

For a list of over one hundred leading commentaries on Revelation see Introduction to Meyer's commentary. See also Swete, Introduction, exciii–ccii.

The following works can be profitably consulted:

"The Apocalypse of St. John," the Greek text, with introduction, notes, and indices by Henry Barclay Swete, D. D. (1906). The introduction is surpassingly excellent. The notes are critical, scholarly, and suggestive. Their brevity is often to be regretted. His method of interpretation is not identified with any of the chief systems of apocalyptic exegesis, but at times it touches each. "With the 'preterists' it will take on the circumstances of the age and locality to which the book belongs, and will connect the greater part of the prophecy with the destiny of the empire under which the prophet lived; with the 'futurists' it will look for the fulfilment of St. John's pregnant words in times yet to come. With the school of Auberlen and Benson it will find in

the Apocalypse a Christian philosophy of history; with the 'continuous historical' school it can see in the progress of events ever new illustrations of the working of the great principles which are revealed. And while it maintains, against the majority of recent continental scholars, the essential unity of the book and its prophetic inspiration, it will gladly accept all that research and discovery can yield for the better understanding of the conditions under which the book was written." Introduction, p. cxciv.

"Letters to the Seven Churches," W. M. Ramsay, D. C. L. (1904). This work is very valuable for the light it throws upon the historical, geographical, and religious condition of the province of Asia. But Professor Ramsay's enthusiasm seems at times to affect his inferences and interpretation. The work is worthy of careful study.

"The Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers," by Frank C. Porter, PH. D., D. D. (1905). Much may be learned of apocalyptic literature, "the struggle of Judaism with Antiochus and Hellenism, and the struggle of Christianity with Rome." The work is learned, but needs to be read with some reserve as to the fulfilment of both Daniel and the Revelation. Professor Porter assumes and defends the late date of the book of Daniel. For the early date see "Speaker's Commentary" (1876); Prof. John B. Davis, "Dictionary of the Bible," Daniel (1898); Schaff-Herzog, "Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge" (1882), Daniel, end of article on Chronology and Genuineness; James Orr, "Problem of the O. T." pp. 428, 458, 534, 536.

The commentary of Milligan, "The Book of Revelation" (1889), and of Simcox, "The Revelation of St. John" (1893), can be profitably compared. "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," by Edward Gibbon, Milman's edition (1856), is recommended.

#### A CRITICAL BASIS.

This volume, like those that preceded it, has been prepared on the Common version in connection with the Critical Greek text. While interpretations and conclusions have been expressed in a popular way to the English reader, they have been drawn and suggested by a careful study of the original Scripture. In many places there is much opportunity for differences of opinion, but generally it has been possible to speak only from our own point of view.

It is well known among scholars that the received Greek text of Revelation was more than ordinarily defective. It was founded on the texts of Erasmus and of the Complutensian editors, as reedited by R. Stephens (1550) and printed by the Elzevirs at Leyden, 1624 and 1633. In forming his Greek text of Revelation, early in the sixteenth century, Erasmus had but one manuscript, and that one, says Tregelles, "appears to have been in a mutilated condition. It contained the Greek text, with a commentary interspersed, and he had to separate the words of the text as best he could. In not a few places he clearly took the commentary for the text, and thus inserted readings found in no Greek manuscript; where his manuscript was altogether illegible, he appears to have relied on the Latin Vulgate, and to have supplied words in the Greek by retranslating them from it. We know this was the case with the last six

verses of the book; in his manuscript they were wholly wanting, owing to its mutilated condition, and he ventured on the bold expedient of supplying them by his own translation from the Latin." The Complutensian editors (about 1520) are said by Wetstein to have had but a single manuscript of Revelation, from whose text, according to Mill, Erasmus in his fourth edition (1527) transferred ninety variations; and as reedited by Stephens (1550), it is asserted of him, that he used only two imperfect manuscripts. As a result some of these imperfections have come down to us in the Common version.

With an increased number of manuscripts, some of them most ancient, it has become possible to form a more satisfactory Greek text of Revelation, from which late English versions have been made. Several years ago, in issuing commentaries on the Epistles, the Improved Bible Union version was placed beside the Common version as the best English expression of the critical text. The same version is used in this volume to make it uniform with preceding volumes. The American Standard Revision is also recommended for reference and comparison, with which the Bible Union version is generally in accord.

Swete, in his valuable introduction to his "Critical Commentary on the Apocalypse" (1906), has a scholarly chapter on the Greek text of this book (pp. clxxxiii-excii). See also Westcott and Hort Greek N. T., Vol. II. Introduction by Doctor Hort, § 344.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK.

##### THE PROLOGUE, 1 : 1-20.

1. The inscription and salutation, 1 : 1-8.
2. The vision of the Lord, 1 : 9-20.

##### I. THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES, 2 : 11-3 : 22.

Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.

##### II. THE VISION OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB, 4 : 1-5 : 14.

1. The vision of the divine majesty, 4 : 1-8.
2. The unceasing hymn of praise, 4 : 9-11.
3. The book with the seven seals, 5 : 1-7.
4. The adoration of the Lamb, 5 : 8-14.

##### III. THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS, 6 : 1-8 : 1.

1. The opening of the first seal, 6 : 1, 2.
2. The opening of the second seal, 6 : 3, 4.
3. The opening of the third seal, 6 : 5, 6.
4. The opening of the fourth seal, 6 : 7, 8.
5. The opening of the fifth seal, 6 : 9-11.
6. The opening of the sixth seal, 6 : 12-17.
7. The sealing of the servants of God, 7 : 1-8.
8. The innumerable multitude, 7 : 9-17.
9. The opening of the seventh seal, 8 : 1.

**IV. THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS, 8 : 2-11 : 18.**

1. The sounding of the first trumpet, 8 : 2-7.
2. The sounding of the second trumpet, 8 : 8, 9.
3. The sounding of the third trumpet, 8 : 10, 11.
4. The sounding of the fourth trumpet, 8 : 12.
5. The three woe-trumpets announced, 8 : 13.
6. The sounding of the fifth or first woe-trumpet, 9 : 1-12.
7. The sounding of the sixth or second woe-trumpet, 9 : 13-21.
8. The vision of the little book, 10 : 1-11.
9. The measuring of the temple, 11 : 1, 2.
10. The prophesying of the two witnesses, 11 : 3-14.
11. The sounding of the seventh or third woe-trumpet, 11 : 15-19.

**V. THE CHURCH AND HER THREE ENEMIES, 12 : 1-13 : 18.**

1. The vision of the woman and the great red dragon, 12 : 1-6.
2. The war between Michael and the dragon, 12 : 7-9.
3. The rejoicing in heaven over the fall of Satan, 12 : 10-12.
4. The deliverance of the woman, 12 : 13-17.
5. The vision of the first beast, 13 : 1-10.
6. The vision of the second beast, 13 : 11-18.

**VI. THE SERIES OF THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH, 14 : 1-16 : 21.**

1. Three consolatory visions, 14 : 1-20.
  - (1) The vision of the Lamb with one hundred and forty-four thousand, 14 : 1-5.
  - (2) The vision of three angels of judgment, 14 : 6-13.
  - (3) The visions of the harvests of the saints and the wicked, 14 : 14-20.
2. The seven bowls of wrath, 15 : 1-16 : 21.
  - (1) The vision of the sea of glass 15 : 1-4.
  - (2) The seven angels with their seven bowls, 15 : 5-8.
  - (3) The first bowl of wrath, 16 : 1, 2.
  - (4) The second bowl of wrath, 16 : 3.
  - (5) The third bowl of wrath, 16 : 4-7.
  - (6) The fourth bowl of wrath, 16 : 8, 9.
  - (7) The fifth bowl of wrath, 16 : 10, 11.
  - (8) The sixth bowl of wrath, 16 : 12-16.
  - (9) The seventh bowl of wrath, 16 : 17-21.

**VII. DESTRUCTION OF THE HARLOT AND BABYLON, 17 : 1-19 : 10.**

1. Description of the great harlot, 17 : 1-6.
2. Explanation of the mystery of the beast and the harlot, 17 : 7-18.
3. Fall of Babylon announced, 18 : 1-3.
4. The summons to the godly to leave the city, 18 : 4-8.
5. Lamentation over the fall of the city, 18 : 9-20.
6. Symbolic proclamation of Babylon's fall, 18 : 21-24.
7. A song of triumph over the fall of Babylon, 19 : 1-10.

VIII. THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL THINGS, 19 : 11-22.

1. Christ destroys the beast and false prophet, 19 : 11-22 : 5.
2. The binding of the dragon, 20 : 1-3.
3. The millennial kingdom of Christ, 20 : 4-6.
4. The final victory over Satan, 20 : 7-10.
5. The final judgment of the wicked, 20 : 11-15.
6. The new heaven and the new earth, 21 : 1-8.
7. Vision of the New Jerusalem, 21 : 9-27.
8. The paradise of God, 22 : 1-5.

THE EPILOGUE, 22 : 6-21.

1. The testimony of the angel, 22 : 6, 7, 10, 11.
2. The testimony of John, 22 : 8, 9.
3. The testimony of Jesus, 22 : 12-17.
4. The benediction, 22 : 18-21.

# I. JOHN

*Fellowship with God through the incarnated Christ; its nature and effects.*

**1** THAT which was from the begin-

**1** THAT which was from the begin-

*a 2 : 13 ; John 1 : 1.*

## CHAPTER I.

In the Introduction we have the fundamental thought of the entire letter, the reality and divinity of the person of Christ, who, as the Logos or Word, existed eternally with God. John has a conscious fellowship with the Father through the manifested Son, Jesus Christ, and he writes that his readers may enter into the same fellowship and share in the joy of God's people (ver. 1-4). This fellowship with God involves a walking in the light; and walking in the light includes a fellowship with God and with the brethren. A fellowship with God involves a fellowship with all his moral excellencies, a departure from all unholiness, being cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ (ver. 5-7).

It includes also a sense of sin and the confession of sin. The denial of sinfulness involves self-deception. But confession of sin brings forgiveness, inasmuch as God's faithfulness and holiness are pledged to this gracious result. The central thoughts of the chapter are walking in the light, fellowship with God, the consciousness and confession of sin, the forgiveness of sin (ver. 8-10).

**1-4. INTRODUCTION.** The writer's message concerning Jesus Christ, his eternal preexistence, and the identity and reality of that life manifested among men, together with his purpose in writing.

**1. That which, etc.** This passage is indefinite in itself, but is fully explained in the following clauses. There is a likeness between the opening sentence here and the beginning of John's

Gospel. In both he connects Jesus Christ with the preexistent life. The other evangelists traced the life of Jesus to Abraham, to Adam. John at one step takes us into the prior eternity. His aim here is to show the identity of that preexisting person, the Word, with that person known among men as Jesus, whose reality was attested by the testing of the senses. Before the birth at Bethlehem, he was known as the Logos, the Word (see John 1:1). As a word makes manifest the invisible thought, so Jesus is the manifestation of God who is the invisible God (1 Tim. 6 : 16). John does not introduce Jesus as a person, in the strict sense, but uses instead a word in the neuter form, **That which.** To the apostle Christ is life itself. But life itself, viewed in the absolute sense, may be looked at more as an idea or a conception than as a person. He did not intend to apply the term directly to the Son of God; in that event he would have used the masculine pronoun. But he had the Son of God in view, and meant to make a strong affirmation concerning him, but the thing here had in mind was the proof, the evidence of the senses that he was a real person. Jesus is more than an individual, one human person; he is also the embodied life. John, in his ideal way, therefore looks upon Christ in this passage as the life rather than as a living person. He regards Jesus as having no beginning in that preexistent state. He was; not he began to be. In like manner Jesus says: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8 : 58). The difference between "he was" and "he began to be" is the difference between an eternally preexistent being

ning, which we have heard, <sup>b</sup> which we have seen with our eyes, <sup>c</sup> which we have looked upon, and <sup>d</sup> our hands

ning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands

*b* Luke 1 : 2; Acts 1 : 3.

*c* 2 Peter 1 : 16.

*d* Luke 24 : 39.

and one whose life had a beginning in time.

**From the beginning.** In John 1 : 1 the apostle speaks of Jesus as existing in the beginning, having his life in eternity, with the implied affirmation that there was no time in the past when he began to be. Alford says that the two expressions, "in the beginning" and "from the beginning" in the drift of their meaning express the same thought. This expression emphasizes rather the point of departure from which his existence is reckoned. He dwelt in eternity, he exists from the beginning. Unitarians and those who deny the eternal pre-existence of Christ make the expression *from the beginning* refer to the beginning of the gospel dispensation. But it is evident from the term "manifested" in ver. 2 that John refers to something that had a prior spiritual existence, and then was manifested, became open to the examination and testimony of the senses. The one manifested was also a person who had been with the Father (ver. 2). Barnes, in his notes, regards the expression as having reference to the beginning of his manifestation as the Son of God. But this is an obviously untenable view. When John uses the expression "beginning" in a limited sense, as in 12 : 7, 24; 3 : 2, the context makes it evident that the reference is to a recent or temporal beginning. Four times the writer makes use of the term, "that which," in this verse, referring to the same thing, the same person. He wishes not merely to show the reality of Christ's existence among men as testified to by a personal examination, but also to show that that which existed in the eternal state is identical with that which was manifested in a human life. It was a real Christ that John believed in; it was the same Christ existing before the foundation of the world (John 17 : 24), manifested in Galilee, suffering on the cross, exalted on high. John gives four proofs, evidences of the reality of the manifested Christ: hearing, seeing, gazing upon, handling.

**We have heard.** The *we* may refer to the entire apostolic body, though the reference must be mainly to John alone. It is noticeable that John has a fondness for repeating the words of the Saviour that reveal the inner life of Christ and his relation to the Father. We must join the expression *of the Word*, rather, *concerning the Word*, to the verb *heard*. The words spoken by Jesus and concerning Jesus bore testimony to the reality of his life and his preexistence. It is on the ground of Jesus' testimony concerning himself, the impossibility of his being deceived, the impossibility of his deceiving others, that we base, to a large extent, our belief concerning his person. Added to his testimony is the united witnessing of men, honest, capable, with large opportunity for observation. Their testimony makes for us an immovable foundation for belief. **Have seen.** This refers to a second and higher testing, inasmuch as seeing is more convincing than hearing. The eye is a better witness than the ear. It was a real life that had been seen. There could be no doubt on this point, it was no apparition. (Comp. 2 Peter 1 : 16) A sight of Jesus embraced also a sight of his miracles, the evidence of a divine indwelling power, showing a close relationship to God, and revealing a life divine before it was manifested here. **With our eyes.** This adds force to the testimony as that of an eye-witness. He can say nothing too strong concerning Christ; in his mind there are no doubts. The reality of Christ's person was attested by his own personal experience, extending through years. **Have looked upon,** rather, *beheld*. This verb is in the aorist tense, indicating the particular acts in the Saviour's life. The word here made use of is different from that rendered *seen*. He does not mean a spiritual beholding, but a contemplation with the bodily eyes. He had riveted his eyes on Jesus as friend, Lamb of God, teacher, Lord. **Have handled,** rather, *handled*. Jesus was no ghost,

have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) <sup>b</sup> that which we have

handled, concerning the Word of life;— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear testimony, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us,—that which we have

*e John 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:10.*

*f John 21:24; Acts 2:32.*

*g John 1:1, 2.*

*h Acts 4:20.*

but had an actual body both before and after the resurrection. (See John 20:20, 27.) That which was from the beginning with the Father, spirit, was now in incarnate form, that could be felt by human hands. The belief in the real Jesus, his humanity, his divinity, is so essential that John presents these four proofs, rising to a climax, heard, seen, contemplated, felt. The eye and ear might be deceived, the sense of feeling could be depended on. Jesus was no apparition; a ghost could not make atonement for sin or know how to sympathize with men living a real human life in the flesh. His words and his works combine to show his divine nature and his real physical person. **Of the Word of life**, rather, *concerning*. The preposition depends directly upon the term heard, and indirectly upon the other verbs. The entire clause is in apposition to the preceding. That which was from the beginning is the Word of life. Two different lines of interpretation arise at this point, springing from different meanings given to the term Word. It is maintained by some that this has reference to the proclamation of life made by Christ. It is better to regard the term Word as having the same meaning that it has in John 1:1. Jesus is the manifested God, the Logos, the Word. The reference is directly to the person of Christ. There is an infinite remove between the terms word and Word. In the Word was life. Jesus is the life (John 16:6), the bread of life (John 6:35), the light of life (John 8:12). Jesus has all fulness of life in himself. One of the ruling words in this letter is life—life in Christ, life with Christ, life for Christ. It does not mean existence simply, but life in its full sense, involving blessedness, holiness, happiness, life like God's own life.

2. This verse is parenthetical. The mention of life in ver. 1 leads John to dwell on this thought, holding back

for a time the conclusion that follows naturally from the preceding statement. **For**, rather, *and, was manifested*. From being invisible it had become visible. Jesus did not begin to be at Bethlehem. There was a revealing of God's life with its holiness, joy, peace, blessedness, through the incarnation. What had been from eternity came into a human life and was handled by men. The manifestation involved a coming in the flesh, and the denial of this was the essence of antichrist (4:2). **Seen**. John, as is his manner, turns this thought over and over again. He had been a personal associate of Christ. If any were wavering in their minds as to the reality of Christ's person, John assures them that he and others had seen the life, the Christ who was life. **Bear witness**. As John could not be deceived and would not deceive others, his testimony should have great weight. He was a witness to what Christ was and did, and what he could do in the hearts of believers. **Show**, rather, *declare*. As a witness John declares, not in this letter only, but always and everywhere that Jesus is the manifestation of all that God has of life for the soul. **That eternal life**, rather, *the life, the eternal life*. Jesus in that preexistent state was the source of all life, physical, rational, spiritual (John 1:4). **With the Father**. This affirms personal association and fellowship with the Father. It proves also that the life here considered was embodied in a person. This verse is not a mere restatement of the first verse in other terms; there is a distinct advance in the thought. Four additional statements are made: The life was with the Father, was eternal in its duration, was manifested; and the apostolic declaration on these points was unanimous and decided.

3. With this verse John resumes the statement of ver. 1. He was an eye and ear-witness of Jesus. What

seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, <sup>k</sup>that your joy may be full.

<sup>i</sup> John 14:20-23; 17:21; 1 Cor. 1:9.

seen and have heard we report to you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship also is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write that our joy may be made full.

<sup>k</sup> John 15:11; 2 John 12.

he had seen and heard he announces in this letter and in his other writings, to those who had not seen Christ in the flesh. The purpose of this writing is announced, **that ye may have fellowship with us:** Have in common the certainty of Christ's presence in the flesh and his divine nature with the consequent peace and joy that come from knowing these things. **Our fellowship . . . Jesus Christ.** John unites his readers, not to a simple outward fellowship with the apostles, but to a spiritual fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ. God is fully made known to us only through Christ the Son. The joining of these two terms together, Father, Son, is a proof, the stronger for being incidental, that John had no doubt of the deity of Jesus. He would not consciously have joined the uncreated God with a created being. The believer may have fellowship with God in the enjoyment of God's own life, peace, joy, thoughts, and desires. Heaven is the life on earth expanded and freed from imperfections. There is a fellowship with God in service. A godlike man reveals God to man. Christians are the letters of Christ known and read by all men. There is a fellowship with God in prayer and communion of soul, the enjoyment of God's presence, as real as that of friend with friend. John's conception of the Christian life is that of a direct personal relation with God through Jesus Christ. This comes, as a rule, only by a correct knowledge concerning God and Jesus. The church is meant to be a help to the spiritual fellowship with Christ. Fellowship with Christ must precede, in order of time, the connection with the church. Any inversion of this order is ruinous to the soul and a contradiction of the Scriptures.

**4.** The purpose of writing is announced by the author. The expression **these things** refers not simply

to what has here been stated, but to the contents of the entire Epistle. He had already announced the general aim of the apostolic proclamations. The **we** refers mainly to John, though it includes the unity of the apostolic teaching. With this announced purpose of writing see also 2:1, 7, 8, 12, 36; 5:13. **Your joy.** The Revised version reads *our joy*. Many old manuscripts have *your*. A result of fellowship with Christ is joy (John 15:11; 17:13). The direct results of the Christian life may be persecutions and losses, but in and through them all will be Christ's own sustaining power and the attendant blessings (Matt. 5:10-12; 19:29). The reconciliation with God, the sense of sonship, the guidance in life, the sustaining care, the hope of a blessed immortality, all contribute to an abiding joy. The results produced in the lives of John's readers, the wider knowledge and holiness begotten in them, would produce in John a fulness of joy. In like manner Paul writes of his own joy begotten by the holy lives of his disciples (1 Thess. 2:19). The repentance of one sinner makes joy among the angels (Luke 15:7). It is one mark of a Christian that his joy is increased in seeing others come to a right knowledge of God. Imperfections in the lives of his readers would disturb the profound peace and rest of his own soul. Paul wept over the ungodly lives of some professing Christians (Phil. 3:18). In like manner God is grieved at the waywardness of his creatures (Gen. 6:6).

**NOTE.—WHY DID JOHN WRITE THIS LETTER?** It is needful to bear in mind John's purpose in writing this letter. The surroundings, the times, the heresies then rife, the peculiar circumstances to which he refers; all these must be kept in mind as helps to the understanding of it. After the martyrdom of Paul the influences which had already begun to oppose them-

selves to the Christian life in the churches of Asia Minor broke forth with increased strength when no longer restrained by the weight of Paul's personal character and authority. The closing part of the first century was full of speculations that touched and opposed the foundation teachings of the Christian faith. They menaced the existence of Christianity itself. The discussions in Paul's letters had reference to the question whether faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour would of itself be sufficient for salvation, or whether in addition to this an obedience to the Mosaic law was not essential. In John's day the main point of conflict was as to the person of Christ. An inadequate conception of the person of Christ must lead inevitably to an inadequate conception of the power and work of Christ. The main insistence of the apostle is on the reality of his person, the oneness of the eternal Word with that person known as Jesus Christ. If he was not a real person, only in appearance, then Christianity itself had no historical foundation; it was in reality only a dream, a deception. If Jesus was not a divine person then he could be no more than a prophet. If he had no real human existence, then he could not have wrought out a redemption for us on the cross. In maintaining the reality of his person, he was maintaining the essential principles of Christianity itself. Without a real, living, personal, divine-human Saviour at its center, Christianity can have no real existence. Two forms of error were at this time prevalent, both of them mutilating the person of Christ. One view of Christ emphasized the human nature of Christ. It dwelt so exclusively on the human side that it, in effect, denied the divine side. This was Ebionism. The other view emphasized the divine side. It regarded the visible form as only an appearance through which the divine glory manifested itself. This was called Docetism, which means a seeming, an appearance. A third view arose, that of Cerinthus. According to him, Jesus was a mere man on whom the divine Spirit rested at his baptism. Cerinthus recognized both the human and the divine in Jesus. But the union was

only a mechanical one; there was not any life union between the two. During the sufferings of Jesus the divine took its departure. In opposition to all these fragmentary conceptions of Jesus, John gives us his testimony, from his own experience, of the manifested glory of that One who was from eternity, who was manifested in a thorough life among men, a life whose reality was manifest to the senses. Some practical mistakes as to the Christian life were also holding sway among the Christians of Asia Minor. Having a consciousness of redemption already secured, they had lost sight of the yet remaining necessity for Christ's work in them, as a sanctifying power. A dim sense of sin made no necessity for a present Saviour possessed of almighty power. Some were hoping for a forgiveness of sins, but with no renunciation of sinful ways in their lives. With them forgiveness was only a mechanical thing, involving no accompanying holiness. To them Christianity was becoming an outward and formal system, not a spiritual and supernatural life. To these theoretical errors and practical mistakes in life John opposes his testimony, his appeal, his counsel. To their errors and mistakes he holds up the living and complete person and work of the Lord Jesus. The best antidote to error is the manifestation of the truth as it is in Jesus.

**PART ONE. 1 : 5-2 : 29. THE NATURE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.** The entire letter falls naturally into four divisions. (See Introduction.) Each division presents God in one distinctive feature of character. The first division centers about the controlling expression, God is light (1 : 5). This is not an incidental statement in reference to God, but is a revelation of God's innermost nature. The statement reveals God.

**1 : 5-2 : 14. WHAT WALKING IN THE LIGHT INCLUDES.** If God be light, his people must be light. If God dwells in light, his people must dwell in light. John aims to bring the large teaching, God is light, into a practical relation to the lives of his readers. He has already shown the fulness of joy which comes from fel-

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that <sup>1</sup>God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in

*b Ps. 104 : 2 ; John 8 : 12 ; 1 Tim. 6 : 16.*

5 And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce to you, That God is light, and in him there is no darkness. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the

*m 2 : 4, 9-11 ; Amos 3 : 3 ; 2 Cor. 6 : 14.*

lowship with the Father and the Son. He plans now by statement and appeal to lead his readers into the recognition of what a walking in the light involves. He wishes to drive away darkness from their intellectual conception of God and of Christ, and their relations with them, also to drive away the moral imperfections from their hearts and lives. The mission of God's Son in the world is to beget light, to reveal God in the life as a creator of light. In order that there may be the development of light in the heart, there must first of all be the clear recognition of the darkness that has been in the heart. With this must be joined confession of sin. On God's part will be forgiveness and a constant cleansing from the moral uncleanness. God's character and human conduct will, in time, coincide in the life of the believer. Walking in the light includes

**5-7. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH THE BRETHREN.** It is not merely a statement with the tongue, but a union of the heart and life with God.

**5. Message.** The substance of the revelation through Christ is given. **Of him**, rather, *from him*. This does not mean respecting him, but from him, as author or means. The entire teaching of Jesus concerning God is found in the following statement. John and his fellow apostles heard the teaching of Jesus, the message came to them at first hand. This message is transmitted to us. There is no possibility of any alteration in it. **God is light.** Jesus had applied this figure to himself (*John 8 : 12*). Doubtless John had heard Jesus apply this expression to God. Light in the Scriptures, and especially in John's Gospel, is used as the image of the divine, the true, the opposite of all darkness. Truth, peace, joy, holiness may be designated as light, inasmuch as they all belong to the nature of the divine. Wickedness, falsehood, misery belong to the darkness. In John's usual manner he states

the negative side of the same truth, **no darkness at all.** God is not a limited or imperfect being, defective in any part of his nature. He is the absolutely holy and perfect one. Some have charged God with being, in some way, the author of sin and wretchedness. Some have charged him with a limitation of power because sin was permitted to come into the world. John defends the moral government of God by declaring that, in no respect, is any defect or unworthiness found in God. Among the Romans Jupiter, Mars, Vulcan, Venus, all the gods were either infamous or subject to limitations that unfitted them for the worship of intelligent beings. Among the Hindus many of the temples for worship are scenes of bestiality and lust; uncleanness is the fitting adjunct of the unclean god. The source of power in the Jewish religion and in the New Testament Christianity is that it has a holy God at its foundation and its center. The great need of paganism, and all forms of religion outside of Christianity, is its need of a right conception of God. A false conception here vitiates everything; it gives false views of the nature of man, the nature of worship, the nature of morals.

**6.** Because God's nature is holy John declares the conditions of fellowship with God. He shows what will be the sign of fellowship with God, and what will declare that no fellowship exists with him. **If . . . with him.** Fellowship means having things in common. All spiritual fellowship assumes a likeness of nature. The likeness in character must find a true expression in the outward life. No fellowship with God can exist without a life in harmony with that fellowship. A fellowship with God, who is light, must make a life whose nature is light. Holiness in God must create a holiness in the godly man. If the lips assert a fellowship with him, the life must declare that fellowship. It is the priv-

**darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.**  
**7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**

**darkness, we lie, and do not the truth;**  
**7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we**

*n 2 : 2; Zech. 13 : 1; Eph. 1 : 7.*

ilege of the believer to be conscious of a oneness with him. **Walk in darkness.** To live in sin as the element of life. A sinful life is proof that there is no fellowship with God. A true Christianity implies a holy life. John is not speaking merely of the beginning of the Christian life, but of its entire course. To be one with God is to be like God. **We lie.** There is an irreconcilable contradiction between fellowship with God and a life in sin. It is impossible to twist the multiplication table into the utterance of an untruth; it is just as impossible to harmonize a life that rejoices in sin with a life that has a fellowship with God. Godliness is holiness. John puts his statement in the positive and negative forms. **Do not the truth.** The term *truth* is not limited in its application to speech; the entire life is embraced. Veracity in word is but a small part of what the Scriptures mean by *truth*. The life must be in harmony with the truth, with God's moral law. If one claim a character that is contradicted by his whole course of life it may be said of him that his life is at variance with the truth, that he is living a falsehood, that he does not do the truth. Jesus speaks of those whose lips laid claim to piety, but their hearts were strangers to God (Matt. 7 : 22). One may have a strong attachment for a church or a creed, and yet have an unchanged heart. It is impossible to have a right conception of a personal and holy God and yet live under the dominance of sin. Sometimes there is a love for God, but the judgment is impaired. The Romanist Xavier was a lover of Jesus, but had wrong conceptions of baptism, thinking that it could regenerate the soul. The New England Puritans loved God, but thought that all holding differing views should be fined, and otherwise punished. Within a century human slavery, lotteries, and the selling of strong drink were regarded as in harmony with the Christian life. An enlarging knowledge

has convinced Christian men that these things are inconsistent with true Christian character. There must always be the intention to do God's will so far as that will is revealed. It may not always be true that a conscious joy will be possessed. Cowper was in almost despair a large part of his life, yet his was a Christian life. Peace, joy, and assurance are not of the essence of salvation. A desire for holiness and the practice of God's will are essential. The Christian life is, negatively, not a falsehood; and positively it is doing the truth. The truth is revealed in Jesus, in his words and life (John 14 : 6). This must be held to, loved, and lived (Eph. 4 : 21).

7. This verse has the thought of the preceding verse with the additional idea of an apostolic fellowship and a consequent purification of the Christian life. **But** shows the contrast between the unreal life, which consents with the tongue only, and that which is real, manifest in holiness. **Walk in the light.** The light means not merely knowledge, but the life of holiness as the element in which the godly man lives and moves. To walk in the light is enforced and defined by the expression, **as he is in the light.** There is no difference in the quality of the goodness that is in God and that which is in the good man. So far as this goodness goes it is of the same nature as God's. Man is limited by imperfections, ignorance, besetting sins, weights, and hindrances, while God is unlimited. If men are in fellowship with God, they are in fellowship with John and the apostolic group. John does not employ the term, church, in the entire Epistle. The fellowship here spoken of is practically identical with church fellowship. If this fellowship had been perfect John would not have added the closing words, **and the blood . . . sin.** This is a pregnant sentence. It declares that Jesus had a real body, otherwise there would be no blood. It declares that this cru-

8 "If we say that we have no sin, we | say that we have no sin, we deceive

*o 1 Kings 8:46; Job 9:2; 25:4.*

cified one was a divine being, the very Son of God. It declares that salvation rests upon the offering made by Jesus. Jesus, in John's view, is not simply an exemplar, a martyr, but his death is a vicarious offering for sin. Does the cleansing spoken of here refer to the forgiveness of sins or to the eradication of sin itself, whereby the nature will have a growing conformity to God's nature, or does it include both? In ver. 9 forgiveness and cleansing from unrighteousness are looked upon as distinct features of God's gracious work. It is best, therefore, to limit the meaning here to the gradual cleansing from sin itself. In the life of the believer the controlling tendency is to a walking in the light. Yet the dark and sinful mingle with the light their disturbing influences. If there is a fellowship with God and with the brethren the blood of Jesus will make known its purifying efficacy, its power to cleanse from all inhering sin. The blood must not be understood in a literal sense; only a spiritual cleansing can be meant, and a spiritual method of cleansing. It stands for the entire work and influence of Jesus Christ. **Cleanseth** is in the present tense, showing the continuous character of the work. The work will go on until all the sinful elements in the heart have been removed. The forgiveness of past sins is completed, once for all, upon repentance. The remaining sinfulness is more and more removed by a progressive purification of the entire life. The redemption through Jesus is completed once for all; the regeneration and forgiveness of sins are completed once for all; the work of building up holiness in the life goes on gradually until the work is complete. Among good and saved men there are gradations in faithfulness, in service, in holiness. Every believer is a sanctified man, set apart for Christ, but there are varying degrees of conformity to Christ (Phil. 1:1). **All** marks the completion of the work. Any religion that does not make provision for both parts of the work, the forgiveness and the sanctification, must

be a failure. The more refined and pure a soul becomes the more sensitive it will be to any taint of sin remaining. Paul had a growing sense of sinfulness (1 Tim. 1:15). The Christ who works for us will, in time, be a Christ fully formed within (Gal. 4:19). This verse refutes many heresies. It refutes that of Cerinthians, that Jesus was not the Christ; that of the Ebionites, that he was not the Son of God; that of the Docetae, that the Christ did not really die; that of the Novatians, who denied pardon to deadly sin after baptism; that of the Antinomians who denied the necessity of moral obedience to the Christian.

Walking in the light includes

**8-10. A SENSE OF SIN AND THE CONFESSION OF IT.** Theoretically a fellowship with God involves sinlessness; practically the one who has a conscious fellowship with God has a constant need of forgiveness.

**8. Purification from sin** implies the existence of sin even in believers. The denial of this is an act of self-deception. The prayer taught by the Saviour implies a constant need of forgiveness. **If we say.** John may be alluding to some of the early Christians who denied any sinfulness since conversion. **No sin.** John does not stop to distinguish here between the sinful nature that yet remains and the actual sin that comes out specifically in the life. He speaks in a general way of sin. Christians have so far ceased from sin that they do not walk in the darkness (ver. 6), but they have not ceased from actual sin. Ideally they are saints and perfect; in reality they are struggling with daily imperfections and have not, by any means, attained unto the measure of the fulness of Christ. If those walking in the light think themselves freed entirely from sin, do not have the constant consciousness of it yet as an indwelling factor, this is a token that the truth has not yet gotten a complete control of the life. In all ages some have maintained that they live without sin. In some cases they affirm this from the belief that no violation of a moral law by a

deceive ourselves, <sup>p</sup> and the truth is not in us. <sup>q</sup> If we confess our sins, <sup>r</sup> he is faithful <sup>s</sup> and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not

ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not

*p* 2 : 4.

*q* Lev. 26 : 40.

*r* Deut. 7 : 9.

*s* Isa. 45 : 21; Rom. 3 : 26

*t* Jer. 33 : 8.

Christian is reckoned as a sin. In some cases the claim arises from a mistaken definition of sin, referring it to some flagrant act alone. Sometimes there is a lack of knowledge of one's own heart, so that a proud self-sufficiency arises. John embraces himself in the term *we*. **Deceive.** This is a more forcible term than "making a mistake." We mislead ourselves, depart from the truth, have wrong views about our spiritual condition. He does not state that this self-deception is wilful, but that it is a fact. **Truth not in us.** This is the negative side of the statement. John does not here allude to veracity or truth telling, but to a lack of conformity to the actual facts of the case. Augustine, Judson, Brainerd, in their writings, show contrite hearts over their own sins. If any believer, from any reason, asserts that his nature is in entire conformity with the truth, it is plain that the truth is not in him.

**9.** This verse has reference to the Christian's ever-abiding need of forgiveness and perfection, and reveals the foundation of his confidence through the faithfulness and righteousness of God. **If we confess.** Forgiveness is ever conditioned upon repentance and confession. God has given no promises except to those opening their hearts to him (Ps. 32 : 5; 61 : 8; Luke 15 : 18). Pardon is not the act of a God who is almighty alone, but of a right-dealing God, taking the heart into account. The true confession may also involve a confession to men and restitution. **Sins.** The reality of sin does not depend on the size or quality of it, but upon its want of conformity to God's will. **Faithful.** God cannot be untrue to his promises (Heb. 6 : 18). No one will seek his face in vain (Isa. 45 : 19). More unchanging than the laws of the physical universe are the laws of the spiritual world (Mark 13 : 31). **Just.** Faithfulness implies the harmony of God's action with God's nature. Righteousness implies that God

will observe the laws which he has himself established. Jesus Christ is the gift of God's love and mercy. Salvation, in its inception, does not spring from obligation on God's part, but is an act of mercy. The original provision is the outcome of the divine love, but having once been established its fulfilment is guaranteed by the divine righteousness. It is implied that if the believer complies with the condition named, if he confesses his sin, it would be an act of unrighteousness in God not to bestow forgiveness. God's righteousness is allied to his faithfulness, and is a pledge that forgiveness will come to the confessor. The confession alluded to is an inward act, the inward confession of sin as sin, involving also the outward confession. The heart and mouth are joined together (Roma. 10 : 10). A twofold work is spoken of. The pardon is complete, though often the defilements of past sins will injure the life; while there goes on in the nature of the believer a work of renovation. There is no chance work in the securing of salvation and holiness. The sense of sin, the repentance, the confession are met, on God's part, by a forgiveness based on his faithfulness and righteousness. The expression **to forgive**, is literally in *order to forgive*. In this one particle (*ina*) lies the most comprehensive and the highest witness of God's love that it is possible to conceive.

**10.** This verse is a strengthening of the statement in ver. 8. As ver. 8 is connected with ver. 7, this verse is connected with ver. 9. The reference is not to a denial of sins before conversion; for the Christian life becomes Christian by receiving Christ's forgiveness for past sins. The statement here, in the perfect tense, is substantially equivalent to that in ver. 8 in the present tense. Meyer distinguishes between them by saying that ver. 10 describes a sinful activity and ver. 8 a sinful state. The use of the perfect tense indicates a life up to and involv-

sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

ing the present. The sinful activity is shown in the use of the plural term sins, and also by the use of the term unrighteousness (ver. 9). An additional thought is now introduced: the denial of sin is not only an act of self-deception, but is, in reality, the assertion that God is a liar, **make him a liar**. God's word everywhere affirms the sinfulness of human nature (Rom. 3: 9-20; Gal. 3: 21). We must accept as true God's statements concerning ourselves. God, in sending his Son into the world, thereby declared that all are in need of redemption. In John's view it is of the utmost importance for right living and correct thinking about God that we have a constant sense of our sinfulness. **His word.** This term corresponds with the term truth in ver. 8. The truth of God is made manifest in the terms and proclamations of the gospel. A denial of the believer's sinfulness shows that the mind is not illumined by the teachings of Christ. There is salvation only for the sinful. A large sense of sin will beget a large need of a Saviour who forgives and makes holy. The two things, the constant forgiveness and the constant growth in holiness must go hand in hand.

#### NOTE.

THE TEACHINGS OF JOHN, IN THE FIRST CHAPTER, CONCERNING GOD. In a marvelous way John, in his apparently simple and disconnected writings, reveals God in his innermost nature and in his gracious relations to men. He does not make logical statements in the manner of theologies and creeds, but incidentally he gives a large insight into God's nature and dealings.

1. We have God's gracious nature devising salvation. Salvation is not of man's devising. Back of salvation, the cross, the Saviour, the forgiveness, was the person of a gracious and merciful God. John reveals a God whose heart goes out after men (ver. 2).

2. The believer may have fellowship with the Father. God is at an infinite remove from man in the largeness of his person, but the godlike man may share in God's very thoughts and life

and joy and peace and holiness. God will have fellowship with him, calling him son; the believer will have the spirit of adoption and call him Father (ver. 2).

3. God, in the essence of his being, is light. The Parsees of India chose the finest of all created things as the object of worship, the sun, the light. God does not simply dwell in light or give light, he is light. John's declaration is not made with the formality or definiteness of a creedal statement, but it is understood at once by all as asserting a complete holiness of character and conduct. He is purity, holiness, joy. The conscience in man that condemns the slightest infraction of right doing is a faint reproduction of that which exists in its fulness in God (ver. 5).

4. Because God's nature is light, he is holy. In all his dealings there is absolute spotlessness. The heathen deities were limited in intelligence, in morality, in power. The Bible reveals a God whose surpassing claim to the reverence of men is his holiness. Everything in God is subordinate to this, which is not a quality in God, but the essence of his being. He is more than the almighty, he is the Holy One (ver. 5).

5. God is faithful. He is true to his nature and to his word. His laws for the physical world are so unchanging that an eclipse can be foretold a hundred years. Jesus declared that his words are more firm than the laws of nature (Mark 13: 31). The assurance of forgiveness rests, not upon an emotional experience, but upon the faithfulness of God to his promise. The "I will" of God is the foundation for the laws of the moral universe (ver. 9).

6. God is righteous. He is a moral God. He is under obligation to his own nature and to his own promises. He is faithful because he is righteous. If God were to prove unfaithful to any promise, he would thereby destroy his holiness and lay aside his scepter of righteousness. Every believer may rely upon his righteousness as an assurance of salvation. Every penitent may find in this the assurance of his

own forgiveness upon repentance (ver. 9).

7. God the Father forgives sins on account of the atoning work of Jesus his Son (2 : 12). This is in harmony with the teaching of Paul that forgiveness is through and on account of the work of Christ (Rom. 3 : 25). It is also the testimony of Jesus (Matt. 26 : 28). The cross is an essential element in the salvation that God brings to men (ver. 9).

8. God the Father works sanctification in the heart of the believer. There is more than the forgiveness that frees from penalty. There is a cleansing, a renovation that goes on in the moral nature. This work will be complete when Christ is seen (3 : 2). The Holy Spirit, secured through the work and intercession of the ascended Christ, brings power, guidance, a growing holiness, a final completion into the heart and life of the believer (ver. 9).

**THE TEACHINGS OF JOHN, IN THE FIRST CHAPTER, CONCERNING JESUS.** John's writings are full of Jesus the Christ. His main intention in this letter is to lead believers to think right about Christ and his work, and to make their lives correspond to his teachings and life.

1. He teaches the eternal preexistence of Christ. In his view Jesus cannot be classified among men. There was no time when he did not exist. A merely human Christ would empty John's writings of all their meaning (ver. 1, 2).

2. He teaches an incarnation, a coming of the Word into union with human nature. The nature of Jesus was not a phantasm, an unreal existence; he had a real body. The eye, the ear, the hand all testified to his real physical life (ver. 1).

3. He teaches that Jesus is the manifestation of God. He is the Logos, the Word. He is the one through whom God is seen and made known (ver. 1, 2).

4. He teaches that Jesus is Son, having a peculiar relation to God whereby Father and Son are terms appropriately used, showing a peculiar and unique relation. John does not use the term trinity, but he believed and taught these abiding distinctions within the Godhead (ver. 3).

5. He teaches that this divine Son, the incarnate Word, is that person

known to us as Jesus the Christ. Some errorists taught that the divine in Christ was separated from Jesus during his sufferings. It was a divine-human person that brought redemption through his sacrifice (ver. 3).

6. He teaches that we may have fellowship with Jesus Christ. It is a personal Christ whom he presents to men, not a dead Saviour. John had seen Jesus living, he thinks of him as yet living. There is a kinship of Christ with his people insomuch that the believer and the Saviour are one in life and destiny (ver. 3).

7. He teaches that the sufferings of Jesus were vicarious and atoning. They were not the sufferings of a good man simply or of a martyr dying for the truth. They were the sufferings of one whose death stood in a vital relation to forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. In Jesus we are accepted (ver. 7).

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Eternal life is manifested in Christ. It is not a pardon for sin begotten by any native goodness in man, it is the gift of God (ver. 2).

2. Only through Christ is there fellowship with God and salvation (ver. 3).

3. Sin separates from God. There can be no alliance between the light and the darkness. They are mutually exclusive (ver. 6).

4. Sin exists in all men. The universality of sin is evident from universal sinfulness. John does not use the term depravity, but he knows no man who does not need Christ (ver. 8).

5. Sin exists even in believers. Sin as a controlling principle, dominating the life is destroyed at conversion, but sin as a disturbing principle remains (ver. 8 ; Rom. 7 : 14-25).

6. On repentance for sin and confession comes the forgiveness of sins in and for Christ's sake. There is created also a power against sinning (ver. 9).

7. The denial of sin by making its seat in the flesh for which we are not responsible, or by affirming that sin in the believer is not reckoned as sin, or by defining all sin as only the good in the making, or by regarding as sins only gross out-breaking sins; such denial shows only

**2** "MY little children, these things | **2** MY little children, these things I

¶ John 13:33.

blindness of mind, and is, in reality, a charging of falsehood upon God (ver. 10).

8. The emphasis laid by John upon the existence of sin in the believer, shows a deepening sense of sin as a mark of a deepening religious life. The apostle had a quickened sense of his own sin because he had a quickened sense of his fellowship with God and with Jesus (ver. 10).

## CHAPTER II.

The opening part of this chapter, extending to ver. 14, continues the thought of the preceding chapter—what a walking in the light includes, viz., an aiming at sinlessness, with no despair or despondency when failures come, since there is an Advocate with God, the righteous Jesus Christ (ver. 1, 2). The test of such a life is doing God's will. Knowing God means the keeping of the commandments; abiding in God means a life like God's (ver. 3-6). Another test of the life in the light is a love for the brother, having a new motive from the life and love of Christ. Not to love is to hate; to hate is to be in the darkness; to be in the darkness means a life of stumbling (ver. 7-11). The forgiveness of sins in the past is a reason for walking in the light. He regards all his readers as little children, dividing them into the mature and immature, giving the characteristics of each class (ver. 12-14).

Having considered the Christian life on its positive side, he now looks at it on its negative side (ver. 15-29).

Walking in the light excludes the spirit of worldliness. God and the wicked world are mutually exclusive (ver. 15-17). It excludes antichrists. Over against the one true Christ are many false teachers who assail him, undermining his authority and influence by denying the reality of his person and falsifying the purport of his mission. Many of these had sprung from the church itself (ver. 18, 19). It excludes spiritual blindness on the part of the believer. A spiritual anointing belongs to him. The believer is a priest (ver. 20-29).

**1, 2. AN AIMING AT SINLESSNESS,**

but with no added despondency at the failure to attain at once the end in view. The opening verse of this chapter ought, from the connection of thought, to be joined to the preceding chapter. John is discussing the question, what walking in the light includes, the discussion extending from 1:5 to 2:14. He has shown that it includes a sense of fellowship with God and with the brotherhood (1:5-7); a sense of sin with a consequent confession (1:8<sup>10</sup>); that the blood of Christ and the faithfulness and righteousness of God (1:9, 10) secure the forgiveness and the sanctification of the believer; that repentance and confession of sin are the human prerequisites for securing God's blessings. He now shows how the contrition in the heart and the sacrifice of Jesus on the earth are complemented by the work of Jesus on high. The historical Christ is merged into the heavenly Christ, these two making one continuous life, involving the completion of the work of forgiveness and purification.

Augustine, who himself had sinned deeply, thought this passage was added lest some persons might pervert the faithfulness and righteousness of God into an excuse for light views as to sin and sinning, knowing the facility of pardon. But this cannot be the only reason. John adds an additional element to the believer's relation to sin; he must not only repent of sin and confess it, but he must also aim to live a life without sin and strive to keep all God's commands.

**1. My little children.** The diminutive denotes affection. He speaks in this tender manner on account of his age, and his venerable character as a father in Christ. Many of those, to whom he writes, had doubtless been led into the Christian life through his ministry; they were his spiritual children. Paul writes in a like manner (Gal. 4:19). Eusebius in his history, written in 324 A.D., gives the beautiful story of John in his old age running after a young man, a confessor of Christ, who had departed from the faith, crying out, "Why dost thou flee from thy

write I unto you, \*that ye sin not. And if any man sin, <sup>y</sup>we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ

<sup>x</sup> Ezek. 3 : 21; Rom. 6 : 1, 2; Titus 2 : 11-13.

write to you, that ye may not sin. And if any one sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the right-

<sup>y</sup> Isa, 53 : 12; Eph. 2 : 18; 1 Tim. 2 : 5.

father"? John unites tenderness, trust in his readers, and tact, with great boldness in statement. The expression **these things**, refers not to the entire letter, but exclusively to what he has just written. The deep sense of sin in its nature antagonistic to God, the consciousness of remaining sin as a source of grief to the believer, the assurance that the work of Christ will bring about a complete moral cleansing (1 : 9), these thoughts lead naturally to the precept about to follow. The moral judgment passed by the believer upon himself differs very widely from the light and superficial judgments of the world. The divine forgiveness creates a resolution to break away from sin, the reliance upon a constantly bestowed renovating power gives confidence. **That ye sin not**, rather, *may not sin*. The aorist tense shows that the reference is to particular, definite acts of sin. The very act of regeneration and conversion makes a complete and definite break between the believer and the controlling power of sin as a principle of life. It is an unconditional exhortation. Such a command springs from the very nature of the holy life, the fellowship with Christ. No compromise with sin can be allowed in the government of a holy God, no division of sins into trivial and mortal can be made, no permission to modify the moral laws can be granted. God's commands must be, like God, very high. He adds, at once, a ground of consolation to those who fall under the power of temptation, and commit sins of infirmity, of ignorance, of weakness. Had John stopped with his exhortation, the believer might be tempted to despair. John connects the sentences with **And**, where another would naturally write **but**. **Any man sin.** Provision is here made, not for the wilful sinner, but for the one who sins against his own inner and true nature (Rom. 7 : 17). John does not discuss the question whether we may live in a sinless state, but passing straightway to this statement implies that each believer will have need of a present divine helper.

The believer who sins must not sink into a slough of despond or be shut up in a doubting castle. He may turn with confidence to a Mediator on high. Having spoken, in a general way, he now by returning to the use of **we**, shows that he himself is included. The present tense shows that Christ belongs to the believer who has yet about him the remains of sin. **Advocate.** The Revised version has in the Margin, Helper, Paraclete. The word is found in John 14 : 16, 26; 15 : 26; 16 : 7. In all these cases the reference is to the personal Holy Spirit whom Christ would send to his people as a helper within the heart. It is implied by Jesus that he himself is a Paraclete, a Helper, inasmuch as he says: "He shall give you another Comforter" (John 14 : 16). A present, living Jesus, who at the first forgave and helped, will now be a perpetual helper. The idea of comforter, in the sense of giving consolation, nowhere inheres in the word. The Advocate is a helper, a strengthener in the upper sphere before God, just as an advocate in an earthly tribunal would plead for a consciously guilty man. Spiritual things are placed before us in a way in which we can understand them, through the use of figures common to men. The advocacy is before **the Father**. He is not spoken of as God, but as one who stands to us as a Father; the believer is in a filial relation. The term Father itself is one of encouragement. Jesus was an advocate for Peter when tempted by Satan (Luke 22 : 32). He was intercessor for those crucifying him (Matt. 23 : 34). Applied to the Lord Jesus it is a figurative expression since the pleading may not be understood as a literal pleading in heaven. It is expressive of the great truth that Jesus has undertaken our cause with God, and that he performs for us all that a counselor or advocate would perform for us in a like position in the earthly sphere. Jesus, in heaven, through his intercession supplements and completes the work begun on the earth. Without the cross the advocacy would not

2 <sup>a</sup>the righteous. And <sup>a</sup>he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but <sup>b</sup>also for *the sins of the whole world.*

3 And hereby we do know that we

*z 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 3:18. a 4:10; Rom. 3:25. b 4:14; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:15, 18-21.*

avail; without the advocacy the cross would not avail to bring to an ultimate salvation. The cross and the advocacy taken together mean a completed salvation. There has always been in the human heart conscious of sin and of the great chasm between the heart and the holy God, a desire for a mediator. Hence everywhere a priesthood has sprung up. Jesus is fitted to act as mediator, the term used by Paul (*1 Tim. 2:5*) because he is divine-human in his person, knowing the temptations of men, also because he is **righteous**. The term *righteous* reveals that nature of Jesus by which he becomes fitted to be the helper to imperfect believers on the earth; he is one whose life satisfies perfectly the will of God. As the holy One he can stand as the substitute for sinners before the throne, as in like manner the symbolically holy high priest entered into the holiest of all, having made an offering for himself. A sinning advocate would be a mockery and a failure.

2. The ever-continuing mediation of Jesus is based upon the previous work of Jesus as a propitiation. There had been a sense of guilt, of estrangement, of condemnation, of obstacles in the way of finding God's favor. Jesus is called the propitiation because he has, by his blood, expiated the guilt of sin. It is to his blood that John attributes the cleansing power (*1:7*). The reconciliation is by means of his blood. Meyer says: "This term does not denote the reconciliation of God with himself or with men, but the justification or reconciliation of the sinner with God because it is never stated in the New Testament that God is reconciled, but rather that we are reconciled to God." This is not strictly correct, because it is asserted that without such an offering God could not grant pardon for sins. He was restrained by his own holy nature from granting forgiveness. The cross had an influence Godward as well as manward. The death of Jesus has reference to our sins. His death

2 eous. And he is a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

3 And in this we know that we know

was vicarious, having reference not only to sins before conversion but afterward. The preposition **for** does not here mean in behalf of, but means more generally, concerning. The propitiation is not for the Christian only, but **for the sins of the whole world**, rather, *for the whole world*. It is a violent perversion of the meaning of this expression to attempt to limit it to the world of believers. John affirms a universal atonement, a death for all, by which every man becomes savable. It does not become a universal salvation unless there be a universal acceptance of Christ. The term **world** must not be limited to the entire number of believers only, but it includes the entire race of fallen man. If all do not obtain the blessings of the reconciliation it is not through any defect or weakness in the provision made. It is sufficient for the salvation of all men, it is efficient only for those who accept it. The wideness of God's mercy is shown elsewhere (*John 3:16; Heb. 2:9*). No one may therefore doubt whether for him Jesus died, whether for him is salvation through faith in the Redeemer. There is to be noted this difference between the propitiation and the advocacy, the one is for all men, the other is for the believer only.

**3-6. THE TEST OF WALKING IN THE LIGHT IS THE DOING OF GOD'S WILL.** John has presented three proofs of the possession of eternal life, the forgiveness of past guilt (*1:8-10*); the deliverance from the power of sin (*1:5, 7*); the aim to live beyond sin (*ver. 1, 2*). These are proofs that we are walking in the light with reference to God mainly. He now shows how this life is evidenced to the inner life of the believer, his own consciousness. Having warned them against discouragement and despair, he now counsels against a false confidence and security.

**3. Hereby.** The reference is to what follows. The test of knowing Christ is keeping his commandments. **Know.** John does not use the term

know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup> But <sup>d</sup>whoso keepeth his word, <sup>e</sup>in him verily is the love of God perfected. <sup>f</sup>Hereby know we that we are in him.

c 1 : 6, 8 : 4 : 29.

d 3 : 24; John 14 : 21, 23 ; 15 : 14.

e 4 : 12.

f 4 : 13.

on its intellectual side, meaning a theoretical knowledge. He does, however, desire a right intellectual apprehension of Christ in order that he may be loved and his work understood. He explains the historical proofs of Christianity; a true religion must rest, not on feelings, but on facts (1 : 1-3). John uses the term *know* in its highest, spiritual sense, the knowledge of the heart, a fellowship with Christ. True knowledge, with John, means a walking in the light, a doing God's will. The Old Testament wisdom consists in the fear of the Lord (Ps. 111 : 10). John's knowledge is the holy perception by the heart. **Him**, is the reference to God or to Christ or to both. If the verse is a continuation of ver. 2 the allusion must be to Christ. But it is better to regard John as going back to the thought of the entire preceding portion, a fellowship with God in a walking in the light. But undoubtedly John has Jesus also in mind, for through Jesus alone is God fully made known to us. **Commandments.** The commands are revelations of himself, each one separately illustrating God's nature. But the life of no believer presents an example of perfect fulfilment of God's commands. In all believers, however, there is a marked purpose, distinguishing them from all others, whereby there is an earnest aim after a complete obedience. Obedience is a test of a holy life. No one may know God unless he obeys God from the heart. It is also true among believers that there will be varying degrees of knowledge as there are varying degrees of the spirit of obedience (1 Cor. 3 : 1).

**4.** This verse is an inference from ver. 3, presenting a contrast between the utterance and the life. There is a similarity with the thought of 1 : 6. Having shown the positive side of the truth, he now presents the negative. There is inconsistency in professing to

him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and in him the truth is not. But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. In this we know

know Christ and yet disobeying his commands. A divorce between the creed and the life shows that the governing principles of the life are wrong; falsehood, a want of conformity to the truth, rules in the heart. A confession of Christ that does not include a life in the light and truth arises from a want of earnestness, from self-deception, and in time from conscious falsehood. John pronounces this man, on the positive side, a **liar**, on the negative side he declares, **the truth is not in him**. God is truth, the believer in him must be in accord with him.

**5.** This verse is in contrast with the preceding, and is an expansion of ver. 3. The **word** embraces the commandments spoken of in ver. 3. All the separate commands of God are embraced in this term, the entire revelation through Christ. John does not here mean the Word, the Logos of John 1 : 1, but the entire teaching of and concerning God, covering the faith and conduct of the believer. He now introduces a new thought, **love of God**, which is synonymous with walking in the light, knowing God, doing his commandments, having the truth in the heart. This expression does not mean God's love to us, but our love to God. **Verily** means truly, in truth, and is opposed to the life deceptive, existing in appearance only, spoken of in ver. 4. **Is . . . perfected**, rather, **hath been**. The one who truly obeys God's commands, in him the love of God has reached its completion. John does not declare that in any believer there has been a complete love of God, leading to a complete obedience. He is dealing, in a general way, with principles, giving the ideal conception of every Christian life, showing also what it will be when the life has reached its completion. In the present life there are gradations of love and consecration, hence of obedience, con-

6 <sup>g</sup>He that saith he abideth in him boughs himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment <sup>i</sup>which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, <sup>k</sup>a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him

6 that we are in him. He that says he abides in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

7 Beloved, I write not to you a new commandment, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you; be-

*g 3 : 6: John 15 : 4-6.*

*h Matt. 11 : 29.*

*i 3 : 11, 2 John 5.*

*k ver. 9-11; John 13 : 34; 15 : 12-15.*

formity to God's will, and of fruitfulness (*Matt. 13 : 8*).

6. In this verse John defines what is implied in obedience to the commands of God. The term **abideth** is stronger than the expression to be in him (*ver. 5*). It denotes a permanent life-union with God, holding fast by faith what has been received. **Ought.** The profession implies obligation. **Him.** The different term here used shows that the reference is not now to God but to Christ. The pattern of the Christian life is the Christ life.

7-11. THE TEST OF WALKING IN THE LIGHT IS THE LOVE OF THE BROTHERHOOD. In a general way John has defined the keeping of God's commandments as the evidence and completion of love to God. He now proceeds to declare that God's commandments are summed up in love, and this love will be manifested outwardly in a love for the brotherhood. The essence of God's commands is found in brotherly love.

7. **Brethren**, rather, *beloved*. This word, beloved, prepares for the utterance of some emphatic statement. **I . . . commandment**, rather, *no new commandment write I*. The emphatic position occupied by the words *no new command*, shows that John is insisting that he is introducing no novel teaching. He wishes to guide them in the right application of what they had long known. It is worthy of notice that John does not here use the word commandments, but refers them all back to one command, the law of love which embraces them all. The command has reference to the injunction to walk as Christ walked (*ver. 6*); his walk was supremely one of love. **From the beginning** marks the beginning of the Christian dispensation, the introduction of the gospel. There is no

allusion to the Old Testament times, to the law given by Moses, or the original creation of the race, although all the commands of the former dispensation were summed up in love to God and love to one's neighbor (*Matt. 22 : 37-40*). The expression, *which ye heard*, in the aorist tense, indicates a definite time of hearing, that time when the gospel was proclaimed to them. The second expression, **from the beginning**, is to be omitted. John has invented no new teachings, prescribed no new duties, but simply taught what was, of necessity, bound up in their received beliefs, and held by them from the first.

8. He represents the old commandment as in a certain sense new. The term **new** would at once suggest to his readers the solemn occasion at the Last Supper, when Jesus had said, "A new commandment I am giving unto you" (*John 13 : 34*). John had beard these words of the Saviour. It would be new to them as something distinctively Christian, inasmuch as the command to brotherly love is founded upon the imitation of Jesus. It would be perpetually new to them, inasmuch as with their constantly enlarging spiritual life the command would have a new power over them. The person and character of Christ have a constantly enlarging horizon to the believer. A larger fellowship with Christ would give a perpetual impulse to the reproducing of Christ's life toward others. **Which thing.** The reference is to the contents of the new commandment, the walking in brotherly love. **In him.** In Jesus Christ was the complete fulfilment of love for others; he gave it a new meaning, a new range, a new motive (*John 13 : 34*). **True** shows that the love is a reality, not a seeming merely. The sentence introduced by

and in you: <sup>1</sup>because the darkness is past, and <sup>2</sup>the true light now shineth. <sup>9</sup>He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and <sup>3</sup>there is none <sup>11</sup> occasion of stumbling in him. But he

cause the darkness is passing away, <sup>9</sup>and the true light is now shining. He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness until <sup>10</sup>now. He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion <sup>11</sup>of stumbling in him. But he that

<sup>t</sup> Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:8.      <sup>m</sup> Mal. 4:2; John 1:4, 5, 9, 2 Tim. 1:10.  
<sup>n</sup> 3:14-17; 1 Cor. 13:2; 2 Peter 1:9.      <sup>o</sup> 2 Peter 1:10.

**because** explains the expression **in you**. Christians were the children of light. Since Christ had come into the world, the darkness had largely passed away. **Is past**, rather, *is passing*. Paul in Rom. 13:11 speaks of the ending of the night and the drawing near of the day of the Lord. The command which they have always known will constantly be a growing power with them. The darkness of sin and ignorance will pass away, and the true light will take the place of the darkness. Jesus is the true light (John 1:9) shining in the heart, driving away the darkness gradually (1:9). In the world at large Christianity has largely dispelled the darkness, idolatry has been driven away, intellectually Christianity has gotten hold of the world's best thought, and the character of Christ has won a unique place in the minds of men (Matt. 13:17).

9. The mention of **light** in ver. 8 leads John to speak of the life of light as a life of love. The new command is a command to exhibit and cultivate brotherly love. In like manner the opposite of love, the spirit of selfishness, is designated as darkness. **He that saith**. The confession of being in Christ, being in the light, is a confession of brotherly love. **Hateth**. The intensity of John's nature is shown in this, that he finds nothing intermediate between love and hatred. Love is the characteristic of the Christian; hate is the characteristic of the unbeliever. John is looking at life, not as it is seen in its present fragmentary condition, but as it exists in its ruling principle, and as it will appear when it has reached its fulfilment, when the controlling principle has come to its proper fruition. The heart, apart from Christ, is under the control of darkness, selfishness, worldliness. However much the life may be covered over at present by a decorous exterior, it is

a life of hate in reality, and will in time be seen to be such. A man must, in the final result, be either for or against Christ, and therefore moved by love or hate. The term, **brother**, applies primarily to the fellow-Christian, for John is writing to Christians only; but it is equally true that hatred toward any fellow-man is a sign that the heart is abiding in the darkness. There is always a special duty toward the Christian brother (Gal. 6:10). **Until now**. Even if there had been an outward union with the people of Christ, and an outward change in the life manifest to all, yet the heart remains in a real union with the darkness. It is the inner life alone which ultimately decides where a man is in his moral standing before God. Christ recognizes but two grades among men, those serving him and those serving the world, those building on the rock and those on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27).

10. This verse takes up the case of the man who loves his brother. It is said of him first that he **abideth in the light**. The exhibition of brotherly love is a proof of dwelling in the light, it is also a help to the development of a larger brotherly love. The light in the heart becomes love to the brethren. Second, **no stumbling in him**. The word rendered *stumbling* means literally a stumbling-block in the way, over which one might fall in the dark. It does not mean that this man will so walk in love that others will not stumble over his wayward life, though this is also a governing principle of the life (Rom. 14:21). It means the man himself will not stumble, his pathway being illumined by such light that he will walk in safety. Love will keep the heart pure, keep down passions, clarify the judgment, and so give security to the believer. Compare the words of Jesus in John 11:10 for the same figure of stumbling.

that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

*Exhortations, warnings, and encouragements.*

12 I WRITE unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for 13 his name's sake. I write unto you,

hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and knows not where he is going, because the darkness blinded his eyes.

12 I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven 13 you for his name's sake. I write to

p John 12 : 35.

q 1 : 7; Luke 24 : 47; Acts 10 : 43; 13 : 38.

11. The opposite case is now presented, that of the man hating his brother. Of him three things are asserted, he is in darkness, rather, *in the darkness*; he walks in darkness, he knows not whither he is going. The first statement reveals his moral condition; the second alludes to his deportment; the third implies that he walks in a life subject to stumblings, not knowing the goal of life, the end toward which he is going. There is a hint in this of the punishment to which he will be subject when the end is reached. Compare the words of Jesus on the same point in John 12 : 35. This man has false views of life, walks in an aimless way, comes to destruction. Sin is its own punishment. The wilful remaining in the darkness takes away the eyesight. Jesus speaks of the law of growth by use, the law of decrease by non-use (Matt. 13 : 12). The fish in Mammoth Cave have no eyes, only sightless eyeballs (comp. John 12 : 40; 2 Cor. 4 : 4).

12-14. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS ALREADY SECURED FURNISHED A REASON FOR CONTINUED WALKING IN THE LIGHT. Having depicted the Christian life in its essential features, its aiming at sinlessness, its conformity to God's will, its love for the brethren, John now passes on to an exhortation, an appeal to steadfastness in the Christian life based on past experience. It is a sixfold appeal, constructed in a methodical and orderly way. The first three classes are introduced by the present, I write, the second group of three by the aorist, I wrote. The structure of the paragraph is as follows:

1. An appeal to all Christians in the present tense, I write, ver. 12.

(1) An appeal to fathers, ver. 13.

(2) An appeal to young men, ver. 13.

2. An appeal to all Christians in the aorist tense, I wrote, ver. 13.

(1) An appeal to fathers, ver. 14.

(2) An appeal to young men, ver. 14.

12. Little children, rather, *my little children*. There is here a tender personal appeal. He calls them, using the same term employed in ver. 1, 28; 3 : 7, 18; 4 : 4; 5 : 21; John 13 : 33. It is a term used by John alone. That the reference is not to children in years is evident from the order employed by John: children, fathers, young men. All believers are spoken of as children. Of these there are the two groups, the more and the less mature. If he had meant little children in years, as many writers have supposed, he would have written children, young men, fathers.

**Are forgiven.** The verb is in the perfect tense, meaning have been forgiven; a forgiveness complete in the past and extending up to the present. **Name's sake.** The name stands for the entire person and work of Jesus, the divine-human mediator and redeemer. There is implied the reconciliation effected by Christ, and also his intercession on high spoken of in ver. 2. John knows nothing of any salvation by church or baptism, salvation in his thought is only through Christ, the personal Saviour. All in the churches are spoken of and regarded as believers in Christ, and hence forgiven. That unworthy persons secured entrance into the early churches is evident from references in this letter (ver. 19), but they came into the churches as professed believers. John takes their profession as real, and therefore their forgiveness as real.

13. Having addressed believers as a whole, he now turns to the classes which collectively made up the church. **Fathers.** This has reference to those who for a long time had been in the Christian life, embracing naturally the older members of the churches. The essential characteristic of the fathers

fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome

v 4 : 4.

is their knowledge. Knowledge does not come at once, this is the fruit of years. It is not always true, practically, that growth in knowledge is proportioned to the years of open confession of Christ. But John is here looking at men and things in an ideal way, in the light of what should be true in the Christian life. **Have known**, rather, *know*. The knowledge will be historical as well as that deeper heart-knowledge that comes from fellowship with Christ. To know him means vastly more than to know about him (*Phil. 3 : 10*). With John there is no true knowledge that is not associated with holiness. **From the beginning**. This may be understood in a limited sense as applying to the introduction of Christianity on the earth. Some of the older members in the churches had seen Christ in the flesh, or had seen and heard the apostles of Christ. It is better, however, to understand this term as alluding to the eternal existence of Christ (<sup>1</sup>: 1). Knowing the divine and eternally existing One, this fellowship would naturally create a holy life, a spiritual knowledge. The second address is to **young men**. John applies this term to those less mature in the Christian life, embracing naturally the young disciples, immature in years, or immature in character. Young life is fitted for conflict and conquest. The young man is full of life, enthusiasm, energy. **Overcome**. The conflicts of life come in the early years; the life will then, as a rule, overcome or be overcome. He does not assert that there will be no struggles in after years; but the same overcoming spirit should lead them to a final overcoming. **Wicked one**. The assaults of the evil one will be especially against the young. Their passions and inexperience make them open to his assaults (*Ps. 25 : 7*; *2 Tim. 2 : 22*). John elsewhere alludes to the works of Satan (<sup>3</sup> : 8, 10, 12) and to his power over the world (<sup>5</sup> : 19). We may be assured that the devil who left even Jesus for a season only (*Luke 4 : 13*), will not

abandon his attacks as long as life lasts. But Jesus Christ and the young disciple taken together will be stronger than any evil being or agency. We now come to the second division of this group of appeals. The tense is now changed from the present to the aorist, *I wrote*. The Received version has **I write** four times, hence this appeal is embraced in ver. 13. A new verse ought to begin here: Many explanations of this change have been given. Some have attributed the appeals in the present tense to the present and following parts of this letter, and the appeals in the past tense to the parts already written. This is the view of Meyer. Some refer the past tense to John's other and previous writings. It is better to regard both tenses, the present and the aorist, as referring to this letter in its entirety, but regarding it from different standpoints. The present tense applies to John's immediate act of writing; the aorist to the reader's act of reading when completed. This is sometimes called the epistolary aorist, used when regarding the letter as a whole when finished. **Little children**. This is a different term from that employed in ver. 12 (*paidia*). Some regard the term used in ver. 12 (*teknia*) as more personal and affectionate, the Revised version rendering it *my little children*. But the terms have substantially the same meaning, and both refer to the same class of persons—all believers—the Christians to whom John wrote. **Have known**, rather, *know*. The term little children suggests the corresponding term Father. In the first division their sins are declared to be forgiven through Christ, here they stand in a personal relation to God as their Father. As children they know the Father, have fellowship with him through the Son. God is theirs, Christ is theirs, a conscious, spiritual life is theirs. They cannot be Christians unless they have the knowledge of God and of the Son. Paul gives us a deep insight into the interior relations in the Godhead when

**14** I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

**15** Love not the world, neither the

evil one. I have written to you, little children, because ye know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because ye know him that is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. Love not the world, neither the things in the

*s John 14 : 7.*

*t Eph. 6 : 10; 2 Tim. 2 : 1.*

*u Ps. 119 : 11; John 15 : 7.*

*x Rom. 12 : 2; Col. 3 : 1, 2; 1 Tim. 6 : 16.*

he speaks of God being the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Col. 1 : 3*).

**14.** As in the first division there is a twofold distinction. **Fathers.** He describes the same classes as in ver. 13, the more mature and the less mature in the churches. He attributes to the fathers the same quality before given, a knowledge of Christ, the divine One. Jesus declared the knowledge of God to be the essence of eternal life (*John 17 : 3*). The young men overcome the devil because they are strong in God's strength. The old men are for counsel, the young men are for war, indicating that the victory of the entire life is to be gained in the early part of the Christian life. The **word of God**, meaning the teachings of God, the revelations of God in every form, abide in and control the life. When Jesus overcame Satan, it was by the use of the Scriptures (*Matt. 4 : 4, 7, 10*). The terms, fathers and young men, embrace all the membership of the church, men and women. Unless the word of God abide in them they will be overcome. The New Testament gives many examples of professing Christians who made shipwreck of their faith and life (*1 Tim. 1 : 20; 2 Tim. 1 : 15; 4 : 10*). Satan is strong and full of wiles; but a young disciple, with an indwelling Christ and an open New Testament, is stronger.

**15-29. WHAT WALKING IN THE LIGHT EXCLUDES.** A walking in the light, of necessity, shuts out certain forms of erroneous thinking with the consequent erroneous living. A life of godliness is both inclusive and elusive. Jesus, while a compassionate Saviour, was utterly intolerant of any claim to equality or partnership with himself. There must be an acceptance of himself alone, the wearing of his yoke alone, the confession of himself alone (*Matt. 10 : 32, 33*). John has de-

scribed the constituent classes of Christians, in their ideal aspect, possessing a full knowledge and full strength. But they are not yet in glory, but living in bodies assailed by temptations, in a world that leads men astray. They are all, therefore, warned against the surrounding perils.

#### 15-17. WALKING IN THE LIGHT EXCLUDES WORLDLINESS.

**15.** The Christian must love God who is love, must love the brother (ver. 10), but he must **love not the world**. The term *world* is used in several senses in the New Testament: (1) It means the creation, the outward physical system; the earth is a place trodden by the feet of the Redeemer (*John 17 : 24*). (2) It is applied to the race of men inhabiting the world. God loved the world and gave his Son (*John 3 : 16*). (3) There is a darker use of the term alluding to the perverted influences and tendencies of the present life, under which view Satan is looked upon as corrupting the minds of men (*2 Cor. 4 : 4*). The hearts of men are largely against God; are not moved by his will (*John 17 : 25*). The material splendor of the present outward world blinded the eyes of men to the spiritual life (*2 Cor. 4 : 18*). The course of this world, its tendencies and habits, are regarded as evil, making war upon the spiritual life (*Eph. 2 : 2*). It is evil, not because God so made it, but because perverted by the evil self-will residing in man. It is not wrong to love the physical world, for its manifestations of design reveal God's power and wisdom (*Ps. 8*). Through nature the devout mind should see God, who is manifest in the creation (*Rom. 1 : 20*). Notice the Saviour's use of the grass, the lily, the bird, in his teachings (*Matt. 6 : 26, 30*). It is right to love men, inasmuch as God loves them. There is

things that are in the world. <sup>y</sup>If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, <sup>z</sup>the lust of the flesh, <sup>a</sup>and the lust of the eyes, <sup>b</sup>and the

world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>Because all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the vain glory of life, is not

<sup>y</sup> Matt. 6:24.

<sup>z</sup> Matt. 5:28; Rom. 13:14.

<sup>a</sup> Josh. 7:21; Job 31:1; Ecc. 5:11; Matt. 4:8.

<sup>b</sup> Isa. 39:2-7.

no blessing on a man for retiring from society and living apart from men in order to get additional sanctity. Jerome, who lived in a cave at Bethlehem, took his worst enemy with him in his own heart with its evil tendencies. Jesus meant his people to be light and salt, to be among men to help them. Read the words of Paul in Phil. 1:24; also the words of Jesus, John 17:15. There is a perverted way of looking at outward things so that they get control of the heart. Paul exhorts Christians not to be conformed to the world, but to be transfigured (Rom. 12:2). John is here speaking of the world in its bad sense as alienated from God, in its influence against spirituality in the life, in its antagonism to the control of the life by the unseen spiritual forces, in its subjection to the controlling power of the evil one. Jesus alludes to the prevailing evil course of things in the present life, "I pray not for the world" (John 17:9, 16). Love to God must be supreme. This love must rule everything else, must use everything to God's glory. What cannot be so used must not be loved, but hated. The prohibition, not to love the world, is strengthened by **neither...world**. This denotes the specific objects in life which are the aims of the ungodly. In its entirety and in its parts the world is not to be loved. The tendencies that lead to a perversion of the right uses of life and of present things are alluded to in the next verse. **Love of the Father.** This is a tenderer term than God. John had spoken of Christians as children (ver. 12). The Christian life cannot be conceived of without a deep, abiding, controlling love for God the Father. Worldliness depends on the state of the heart, not on the surroundings or possessions. Thomas à Kempis, in his "Imitation of Christ," creates the impression that there must be a physical separation from the world in order that a fitting unworldliness may be attained. A true

fellowship with Christ will make possible a real imitation of Christ in business, in society, in the leadership of communities.

**16.** This verse gives a reason for ver. 15, showing that the world is alienated from God, and showing also the elements of the world's power. **For** assigns a reason why the world must not be loved. He mentions three temptations in the world which constitute a sinful trinity. As the world is against God, so is this anti-trinity in enmity to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three find their dwelling-place in the heart, but are called into activity by the outward surroundings. A holy being might live in the same surroundings and find no harm to the soul. **Lust**, in both cases in this verse, has a perverted sense, meaning uncleaned and corrupted desires. **Flesh** stands for the physical man, for all the sins which spring from or find their home in the physical organization. Such sins are drunkenness, gluttony, licentiousness, all sins of uncleanness and sensuality are included here. The term flesh does not of itself assert selfishness or sinfulness, for John declares again and again that Jesus had a body of flesh (John 6:51; 1 John 4:2, 3, 25, 27). Nowhere does John incline to the first-century heresy that all matter is sinful in itself; he always stoutly opposes this notion. There are instincts of body that are not wrong, the feeling of hunger, of thirst, of pleasurable sensations. But a sinful and sinning agency has perverted the nature so that it is not only a minister of evil thoughts, but it is, in turn, a creator of evil thoughts. So much has this nature been debased that the term flesh in the New Testament is almost always opposed to the term spirit, and stands for weakness and sinfulness. **Eyes.** Through the eyes the outer world is brought into relation to the spirit within. The enticements of life that allure and deceive the soul, the power of things seen to

pride of life, is not of the Father, but  
17 is of the world. And <sup>a</sup>the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; <sup>b</sup>but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

of the Father, but is of the world.  
17 And the world is passing away, and the desire thereof; but he that does the will of God abides forever.

c 1 Cor. 7 : 31.

d Matt. 7 : 21, 24, 25.

crowd out the power of things unseen, all these make a menace to the soul. An unclean picture, an evil page, a sinful gesture, may work irreparable injury. The eye was made to drink in beauty, to come into a loving fellowship with outward things bringing God nearer, but a perverted eye brings ruin. The flesh within, the world outside, and Satan, constitute a sinful trinity. In John's day were the unclean sights at the theaters and the savage contests in the arena. Our first parents looked longingly upon the forbidden fruit before they took it; Jesus beheld the glory of the world's kingdoms; but he kept his faith steadfast. **Pride**, rather, *vain glory*. This is a vainglorious pride arising usually from the possession of material things. It includes vanity, ostentation, delight in show. The word here rendered *life* is not the highest term indicating the spiritual life, but *bios*, meaning the course or manner of life. Two things are affirmed of these corrupting manifestations, they are **not of the Father**, they **are of the world**. The *of* means *out of*, springing from as their source. They do not derive their origin from the Father, but from the world. It requires rare wisdom to use the world, its forces and opportunities, the body with its powers and passions, in such a way as to fulfil one's mission here and find God's favor at last.

17. John now gives an additional reason for not loving the world: because it is but a fleeting show, and the desires which it inflames can have but a momentary gratification. **Passest away**. The present tense indicates the constant change now in progress. The allusion may not perhaps be so much to the passing away of the material world which is spoken of in 2 Peter 3 : 10, but to the constant change in life whereby it so much resembles the stage (*comp. 1 Cor. 7 : 31*). The one who seeks his highest good in the perishable will find nothing, in the end, but disappointment. All that is earthly

is fleeting, only invisible things deceive not. The things that cannot be shaken by convulsions in nature are the unseen things (*Heb. 12 : 27*). **Lust thereof**. Under this term he embraces the three lusts spoken of in the preceding verse. It is a lust not after the world, but a lust that springs from it. When he speaks of the world passing away, he means in reality the ungodly men who live in an ungodly manner. In complete contrast with these is he that **doeth . . . abideth forever**. God is eternal, his counsels and plans will stand forever. He who does God's will has in himself the power of an endless life. Confusion and final disaster belong to those who are not in harmony with God. **Passest away** and *forever* are contrasted with each other, as also doing the will of God is contrasted with the lust of the world. An eternally blessed life belongs to the man who sides with God. Dives owned the outward things of this life; Lazarus owned all the next life, and the best things of this life.

**18, 19. WALKING IN THE LIGHT EXCLUDES THE CONTROL OF THE LIFE, ITS BELIEFS AND CONDUCT, BY ANTICHRISTS.** This section is intimately connected with the preceding. John now proceeds to consider, not principles, but persons who rise up in antagonism to Christ and Christianity, and subvert the faith of the unguarded. The first centuries were fruitful in heresies that tended to destroy the foundations of Christianity by attacking the true conceptions of the person and work of Christ. False teachers had arisen and were at their destructive work, the names of some of whom we know from current history. John applies to them a most expressive phrase, summing up in one word, their character, their teachings, their ultimate destiny—**antichrists**. These words will be of use in all ages, making a call upon the church to be on its guard against false teachings. Christ in his person is the foundation of Christianity,

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist | 18 Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist is

e 1 Tim. 4 : 1; Heb. 1 : 2.

f 2 Thess. 2 : 3, etc.

the essence of the truth, the source of revelation, the founder and ruler of the church, the exemplar of the true life. Errors vary with the passing centuries, but it will be found that all heresies and misconceptions of fundamental truths will find their correction in a more accurate knowledge of Christ's person, work, and authority.

**18.** In proportion to the gravity of the situation does John manifest his tender regard for his spiritual children, **little children.** **Last time**, rather, **last hour**. Two interpretations of this passage are given. Calvin and others regard this term as applicable to the entire Messianic period, from the personal coming of Jesus to his second advent. In the Old Testament the Messiah was promised in the last times (*Isa. 2 : 2; Acts 2 : 17*). The Jews therefore spoke of the age before Christ as the present age, and the age after Christ as the coming age. In the New Testament (*Heb. 1 : 2; 1 Peter 1 : 20*) it is represented that Christ has appeared in the last times. There can be no other Christ, no other redemption, no further display of God's grace for salvation—these are all centered in Christ. There will, therefore, be no further kind of age than the present so far as redemption is concerned. The view of Alford and Meyer is that the reference is, not to the entire Messianic period, but to a part that immediately precedes the final coming to judgment. It is urged, first from ver. 28, that the speedy personal coming of the Lord was before his mind at this time; secondly, that not the entire period was meant; thirdly, in the Gospel of John the resurrection, accompanying the last things, is placed in the last day (*John 11 : 24*); fourthly, many passages in the New Testament correspond with this view (*2 Tim. 3 : 1; 1 Peter 1 : 5; 2 Peter 3 : 1*); fifthly, the signs of approaching dissolution, together with the presence of rank heresies, impressed John with the belief of an age almost run. It was taught by Jesus that the times and seasons God had reserved for himself, no angel, not even the Son of man, when on the earth, knowing the time

of the end (*Mark 13 : 32*). The ability to compute the time of the final consummation, or of the definite parts of it, is not promised to the teachers of the Christian era. Alford has these words: "We understand the apostle to be speaking, as any one in any subsequent age of the church might have spoken, and as we may speak now, of his time as being the last time, seeing that the signs of the last time were ripe in it. How long it may please God to prolong this last hour, how long to permit the signs to continue which demonstrate each age of the church to have this character, is a question to which it was not given to him, and is not given to us to reply." **Ye heard.** This refers to their first hearing of the gospel from Paul, John, and others. John speaks of the contents of that preaching as containing the testimony concerning these times of false teachers. What is now come to pass ought not therefore to surprise them. The fulfilment of prophecy, whether written or unwritten, is a strong proof of the inspiration of the prophecy. Jesus foretold coming events, by the fulfilment of which they would be assured not only of his wisdom but of his knowledge (*John 13 : 19*). **Antichrist shall come**, rather, *cometh*. This is the present tense, indicating a fixity in the coming: the coming may not be, so far as the form of the words is concerned, for centuries hence. What is meant by the term antichrist? So far as the etymology goes it may mean one who comes in the place of Christ, a false christ (*Matt. 24 : 5, 11*), or an enemy of Christ. In favor of the meaning, against Christ, is John's usage. If he had meant one coming in place of Christ he would have said pseudo-christ as he uses the term pseudo or false prophet (*4 : 1*). The Greek interpreters have always understood the meaning to be enemies of Christ. The reference here seems to be to one distinct person who should appear, summing up in himself all the opposition to Christ. It is agreed by almost all interpreters that John understands by this enemy the same person spoken of

shall come, seven now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it

coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; whence we know that it

*g Matt. 24:5, 24; 2 John 7.*

by Paul in 2 Thess. 2:3. There is a close correspondence between the definitions of the two, in the form of the words and in the general features. Meyer says: "Like the second coming of Christ, so the appearance of antichrist also belongs to the future; of antichrists, as they had appeared in the time of John, there has never since been any lack; but the antichrist has not yet come. It is arbitrary to regard Mohammed or the pope as the antichrist." Neander declares that equally with the development of Christianity the evil will gradually increase in its contest with Christ until at the last, when it has attained its highest summit, it will find expression in a person, and will be overcome by Christ. (See on 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 12.) **Even . . . antichrists,** rather, *even now have there arisen many antichrists.* We are not to infer that these antichrists, taken collectively, constitute the one antichrist spoken of, rather are they forerunners of that personal being yet to come, filled with his spirit. These teachers are enemies of Christ in teaching and in life. He defines them afterward as those denying the Father and the Son (2:22), denying also the incarnation (4:3). An antichrist may be a Nero, a Simon Magus, a Voltaire, a priest usurping powers that belong to Christ only; those described by John in this immediate connection had been nominally Christian. This evil principle had long been working in the churches. When Paul took leave of the elders of Ephesus in A. D. 55, he said: "From among your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). The first century was peculiarly fertile in heretical teachings, arising from the introduction of many into the churches who wished to combine their former religious and philosophical notions with Christianity. The power of the false teachers would consist in the seductive character of their teachings, having a mixture of truth and reason whereby the error would get an entrance into their hearts. The heresies of recent

centuries are, in the main, only new forms of the old errors that made their attack upon the church in the early centuries. In general the antichrists are not to be identified with heathen or Jewish opponents, for these had been, from the first, the open and avowed opponents of Christianity. The disciples had always lived in the midst of their opposition. The strength of the false teachers would arise from their possession of partial truths. History has not preserved the names of their **many** false teachers. Cerinthus stands out the most prominent. The encyclopedias under the title, "Gnosticism," will show how the first two or three centuries were influenced and corrupted by enticing perversions of the truth. Irenaeus, who died in A. D. 190, writes: "And there are those still living who heard Polycarp relate that John, the disciple of the Lord, went into a bath at Ephesus, and seeing Cerinthus within, ran out without bathing, and exclaimed: 'Let us flee lest the bath should fall in, as long as Cerinthus, that enemy of the truth, is within.'" **Whereby we know.** These teachers have the characteristics which it was foretold that many would have before the final close of this age. Jesus had foretold the coming of such teachers (Matt. 24:5, 24-27). Their coming is a proof that it is the last dispensation. Paul mentions certain events that would precede the final appearance of Jesus (2 Thess. 2:1-9). That "his coming" was not far remote was a belief that, in all probability, filled the minds of the early disciples.

**19.** This verse describes the origin of the false teachers. They once had an outward connection with the church, but John affirms that they never had the inner fellowship with Christ. A solemn crisis had arrived in the history of the church; there were defections on the part of members, leaders in the church. A crisis, like it in nature, had occurred in the ministry of Jesus (John 6:66). This verse is also an encouragement to the remaining disciples who might fear from the defection of these teachers that the entire church

19 is the last time. <sup>b</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, <sup>c</sup> that they might be made manifest, <sup>d</sup> that they were not all of us. But <sup>e</sup> ye have an unction <sup>m</sup> from the Holy One, and <sup>n</sup> ye know all things.

19 is the last hour. They went out from among us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have abode with us; but it was in order that they might be made manifest, that they are not all of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy

<sup>a</sup> Deut. 13 : 13; Acts 20 : 30.    <sup>f</sup> Jer. 32 : 38-40; John 6 : 37; 1 Peter 1 : 2-5.    <sup>k</sup> Rom. 9 : 6; 1 Cor. 11 : 19.  
<sup>b</sup> Ver. 27; 4 : 13; 2 Cor. 1 : 21, 22.    <sup>l</sup> Mark 1 : 24; Acts 3 : 14.    <sup>n</sup> John 14 : 26; 16 : 13.

was in danger of going to pieces. **Went out from us.** They had been members of the outward church, receiving and teaching its doctrines. This enhanced their guilt and also added to their power. Their secession from the church would confuse both the remaining members and also those who were outside. **Of us.** John distinguishes between the true and the false member. In appearance they both were in fellowship with Christ, in nature they were different. The unreality of their life is shown in their leaving the church, **for if . . . with us.** The expression, **no doubt**, is to be omitted. John speaks confidently on this point. If they had been true, they would have endured. These teachers had known the church, they had not known Christ. With John, to deny the coming of Christ in the flesh, an incarnate Son of God, is to deny Christ himself, to destroy Christianity, and to pass out of the domain of truth and life. It is not ours, however, to declare that even for such an one there is no salvation. One may trust in Christ as Saviour even while mistakenly and illogically denying his divinity. While declaring that these teachers had not known the truth, he does not make the universal statement that it is impossible for one to fall away from the truth. **But . . . manifest.** Paul declares that there must be heresies, defections, divisions, that it may be made manifest who are the genuine members of the church (1 Cor. 11 : 19). That which produces heresies is an evil, but the evil being present it is a wholesome necessity that it should be openly manifested that it may be separated from the true church life. **That they were not all of us,** rather, **how that they all were not of us.** The meaning is that the defection of these false teachers shows that all of them

had no real fellowship with Christ, rightly conceived of and regarded. It has this lesson for the future that there is a possibility of further defections; when they come they need not overwhelm the church with surprise or sorrow.

**20-29. SPIRITUAL ANOINTING SHOULD GIVE PROTECTION AGAINST DECEIVERS.** John turns from the deceptions of the antichrists to the security of the believer. The mind of the believer is not unguarded, open to every attack of the evil one. As Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10 : 38), as prophet, priest, and king were anointed of old, in like manner all Christians are anointed by the same Holy Spirit. They therefore are fitted to discern between Christ and antichrist. Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all the truth (John 16 : 13). What was included in this promise would be a reality in their thinking and living. The Holy Spirit, sent in answer to the prayer of Christ, would lead to right beliefs about Christ.

**20. But . . . Holy One,** rather, *And ye have an anointing from the Holy One.* The anointing refers not to the act of anointing, but to the oil or ointment by means of which the anointing takes place. The reference here is to the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament the oil of anointing (Exod. 29 : 7, 21) was the symbol of the Holy Spirit. It set apart the person so anointed, and symbolically consecrated him. The anointing here spoken of signifies that the person belongs to Christ as opposed to antichrist, and also has received the same prophetic spirit as the Lord Jesus. What was restricted in the Old Testament to the leaders is now given to all believers (1 Peter 2 : 5, 9). Christ is preeminently the anointed one, the terms Messiah

- 21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.  
 22 ¶ Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

- 21 One, and ye all know; I have not written to you because ye know not the truth, but because ye do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.  
 22 Who is the liar, but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he that denies the Father and

*o Rom. 15:14, 15; 2 Peter 1:12. p 4:3; 2 John 7.*

and Christ both alike having this signification. The term *Holy One* does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the Father or the Son, both of whom are absolutely holy in nature. Believers are thereby placed in fellowship with God, and are guarded in their inner lives from unholy and seducing influences. **Know all things.** John is describing, as is his manner, the ideal conception of the Christian. The natural result of the Spirit's presence and teaching, when his work is complete, will be a complete and full knowledge of all essential Christian truth. As a matter of fact large limitations must be made in the application of this statement to the practical life, inasmuch as it remains true that all Christian life is far below its proper level and its consequent privileges. The reference here is not to all knowledge, but only to spiritual knowledge. The Holy Spirit reveals to a man the nature of his own heart, leads him to love moral and spiritual truth, enlarges his mind that he may see more truth, gives him clearness of view and steadfastness in belief. Having spoken previously of the Father and the Son, he now speaks of the Holy Spirit. There is in the Greek a play on the words that cannot well be rendered into English; having received a chrism, rendered an anointing, they are to be Christian that the antichrist may not lead them astray. To get a knowledge of God and the holy Scriptures the knowledge of books must be supplemented by spiritual enlightenment.

**21.** This verse is apologetic, assuring the readers that in writing to them the author does not disparage or doubt their knowledge. The **have written** refers most probably to what he has just written. The Christian truth is already known by them. He writes to awaken in them their consciousness of the truth. **Know the truth.** Jesus Christ is himself the truth. The facts received

concerning Christ and their own consciousness united in giving them a firm possession of the truth. He writes to them for this reason, because they know the truth and because **no lie is of the truth.** John seeks to awaken the inward perception of the truth, and the love for the truth, in order that falsehood may be rejected. With John, a falsehood is not a modified truth but a lie.

**22.** We now pass from the general consideration of falsehood as opposed to truth, to a particular form of the untruth. **Who is a liar,** rather, *Who is the liar.* The one especial form of falsehood at that time most to be feared, that to which his readers were most open, was the one now spoken of. The central falsehood is **denieth that Jesus is the Christ.** To this formula may be reduced most of the heresies of the age, especially that of Gnosticism, with its manifold variations, which made Christ an emanation or æon who joined the man Jesus for a season. John makes this earnest appeal, passing from the abstract lie of ver. 21 to the concrete liar of this passage. If any one maintained that Jesus was only a man, not the divine, incarnate Son of God; if any one denied his humanity, making him only an appearance; if any one declared that he was not the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy; if any one denied that the divine nature always dwelt in Jesus, such persons were, in John's mind, guilty of denying the real Jesus. **He . . . denieth,** rather, *This is the antichrist, even he that denieth.* John does not declare that these persons denied the existence of God or his general attributes. To think wrongly about Christ is, as a result, to think wrongly about God. (See John 1:18.) Where Christ is not known as a historical person, God is not rightly viewed as God, much less as Father.

**23.** John reaffirms in this verse the

- 23 ¶ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] ¶ he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.
- 24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, 25 and in the Father. ¶ And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.
- 26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.
- 23 the Son. Every one that denies the Son has not the Father either; he that confesses the Son has the Father also.
- 24 As for you, let that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you. If what ye heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye also will abide in the Son, and in the Father. And 25 this is the promise which he himself promised us, the life eternal.
- 26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are leading you

q John 5 : 23; 15 : 23; 2 John 9.

r 4 : 15; John 14 : 7.

s Ver. 7; 2 John 6.

t 1 : 3; John 14 : 23.

u 1 : 2; 5 : 11-13; John 17 : 3.

x

Mark 13 : 22; 2 Peter 2 : 1-3; 2 John 7.

teaching of the preceding. He makes his statements in both the negative and positive forms. The antichristian spirit makes three denials, the denial that Jesus is the Christ, the denial that he is the manifestation of God as Son, and therefore the denial that God is Father. **Whosoever** does this **hath not** the Father. No one knows the Father but the Son (Matt. 11 : 27). The **hath not** refers not merely to right intellectual conceptions of God, but to the possession, the having spiritual fellowship with God. It may rightly be said of the believer that he has God, and is in loving fellowship with him. **He . . . also.** In the Received version these words are in italics, signifying that they form no part of John's writings, but were supplied by the translators.

**24.** The false teachers introduced novelties in their teachings; their doctrines were opposed to the steadfast message of the gospel. John now introduces the apostolic teaching as the standard to which all teachings must correspond. **Let . . . beginning,** rather, *As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning.* Many had fallen away and estranged themselves from fellowship with God and with the Son. By way of contrast he appeals to the faithful followers. *As for you . . . abide.* The teachings which they had heard should be allowed to influence them permanently. The truth concerning the Father and the Son will, if that truth be kept in mind, constantly enlighten their hearts. **Beginning.** The Christian teaching, concerning Christ, had been uniform. The words they heard at the beginning were the unwritten scriptures with

which everything must be compared. We now have the written New Testament with which every teaching must be compared. A promise is joined with the appeal. **Continue,** rather, *abide.* The abiding in God is the substance of the promise. God's word being in them will result in their being in God. The dwelling in God means security, fellowship, a blessed oneness. Jesus speaks of his words abiding in them (John 14 : 20). These words of John are to be interpreted in a spiritual manner. John teaches that the use of means is essential to the highest spiritual life, the spiritual life will never take care of itself.

**25.** This verse is the unfolding of the latter part of ver. 24. The abiding in Christ means life, eternal life. The promises of God all rest on fellowship with Christ. **Eternal life,** rather, *the life eternal.* It is life in its fullest sense, a large, abounding life akin to God's, a participation in the highest and truest existence.

**26, 27.** Before closing this section John makes another statement concerning his purpose in writing and concerning their security. **These things.** The reference is to all that he has just said concerning false teachers. **Seduce you,** rather, *that would lead you astray.* The present tense shows that these evil teachers were then at their work. His readers had been kept from the power of their seductive teachings. John's faithfulness in teaching and in writing may have been one of the agencies whereby they were preserved. He notes again his former teaching (ver. 20) that the presence in them of the Holy Spirit as teacher would be to them a source of knowl-

- 27 But <sup>r</sup> the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and <sup>s</sup> ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing <sup>t</sup> teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, <sup>b</sup> ye shall abide in him.
- 28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, <sup>o</sup> when he shall appear, we may have confidence, <sup>d</sup> and not be ashamed before him at his coming.
- 29 <sup>e</sup>If ye know that he is righteous, ye

- 27 astray. And the anointing which ye received from him abides in you, and ye have no need that any one teach you; but as his anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is truth, and is not a lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him.
- 28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, if he be manifested, we may have confidence, and not turn away from him with shame at his coming. If ye know that he is right-

<sup>y</sup> Ver. 20; 1 Peter 1 : 23.

<sup>z</sup> Jer. 31 : 33, 34.

<sup>a</sup> Vers. 20, 21.

<sup>b</sup> John 15 : 4-7.

c 3 : 2; Col. 3 : 4.

<sup>d</sup> 4 : 17; Isa. 25 : 9.

<sup>e</sup> Ver. 1; Acts 22 : 14.

edge. This anointing, the possession of all Christians, was secured through Christ. **But . . . received**, rather, and as for you the anointing which ye received. The emphatic position in the sentence, and as for you, emphasizes the vast difference between his readers and the false teachers. The abiding presence of this holy chrism or anointing oil in them would render superfluous any other teaching. John now makes three statements: first, as the same anointing, rather, as his anointing, alluding to Christ's Holy Spirit sent into the heart; the Spirit teaches all things needful. Secondly, the teaching is truth, rather, is true. The Spirit will not lead into foolishness or falsehood. Thirdly, there is the gracious statement that, in their case, there had been a walk in accord with the Spirit's teaching. In consequence of this ye shall abide, rather, ye abide. There was a present walk with Christ and a dwelling in Christ because there had been a reception of the Holy Spirit who had taught of Christ (John 16 : 14). In him refers to dwelling in Christ.

28. While John refers all of knowledge and salvation to the Son and the Spirit, yet he recognizes the need of human watchfulness. Salvation is of grace, but not by force; so that no one is saved apart from watchcare, constancy, piety, purity. He now exhorts them to a steadfast perseverance in the direction of the true life, until they attain the goal. Little children, Abide is one of the favorite words of John occurring twenty-three times in this letter. John had heard his Master use this word eleven times in the teaching concerning the vine and the branch (John

16 : 1-16). When . . . appear, rather, if he shall be manifested. Jesus is now in glory, he will come again in person. Having had a personal fellowship with him there was a longing desire in the first century to see him again. The persecutions to which the church was exposed added to this desire. This feeling should, to a large degree, be found in the church in all ages. John does not here indicate when he will come. Whether in that age or in far after ages, the life should be so lived that there may be confidence, rather, boldness, before him. If they should follow the false teachers and deny Christ or have unworthy conceptions of him, there could be no boldness. John draws an argument from the end of all things as a help to a daily guidance in life. The opposite of boldness is ashamed. (Comp. Dan. 12 : 2.) A false life or hope will bring confusion and destruction (Matt. 7 : 21-23). It is noticeable that John joins himself with his readers in using we. All alike needed a life that should welcome Christ's coming with joy.

29. With the preceding verse the first section closed. The keyword of that section is, "God is light" (1 : 5). This verse is, in reality, the introduction to the second section, the keyword of which is, "God is righteous" (3 : 8). It ought to be joined to the next chapter. It follows as a matter of course from God's righteousness that every Christian should be righteous. It was a part of their common stock of knowledge that the life lived in the light (1 : 7) must be a holy life, ye know. Doeth righteousness defines the life that springs from forgiveness. This is the result of the new birth, not the occasion or cause of it. He refers, not

know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

eous, ye know that every one that does righteousness has been begotten of him.

f 3 : 7-10; 4 : 7; 5 : 1.

to Christ, but to God. (See 3 : 8.) **Born**, rather, *begotten*. Jesus is the only begotten Son, all Christians are sons through regeneration of the Holy Spirit. They thereby become the children of God. It is a correct and necessary inference that a life of godliness is the best evidence of a relation to God as a child.

#### NOTE 1. THE WORK OF CHRIST IN ATONEMENT AND INTERCESSION.

1. In his person Christ is sinless. He requires neither expiation for his sin nor an advocate before the Father (Heb. 7 : 27).

2. His work on the earth is expressed by expiation (2 : 2). The expiation makes a reconciliation, an at-one-ment (2 Cor. 5 : 20).

3. This expiation is universal in its scope. Through his death all men stand in a different relation toward God.

4. The atonement remains as a permanent fact, needing no repetition, having a perfect efficacy.

5. His work in heaven is indicated by the term advocate (2 : 1). He is the ever-living Redeemer.

6. The advocacy in heaven concerns the need of help after the expiation, arising from our infirmity and the remains of indwelling sin.

7. This work is a real work, not simply a figure of speech. It excludes of necessity all intercession of saints, angels, and that of the Virgin Mary. They are needless, and declare, in reality, the insufficiency of the intercession of Jesus (John 16 : 26).

8. The atonement and the advocacy supplement each other. Without an atonement the work of intercession would be valueless. Without the intercession the atonement would be inadequate and weak. His perfect life, his vicarious death, his presence before the Father, are all equally essential.

9. Every New Testament writer, under differing terms, expresses the need and the fact of a sacrifice for sin. Jesus alludes to his vicarious death

with its blessed fruits (Matt. 26 : 28). Paul speaks of the one death as the means of human salvation (Rom. 3 : 24). Peter speaks of Jesus bearing the sins of men in a real way (1 Peter 2 : 24). The entire book of Hebrews is full of the explanation of the Old Testament rites in the light of the cross and intercession of Jesus.

**NOTE 2. JOHN'S IDEAL CONCEPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** John is very practical, dealing with love for the brethren, giving counsel concerning false teachings, enforcing the claims of a pure and holy life. But he deals also largely in ideals. He writes of the Christian life; not so much as it is now, but as it ought to be—its ideal character.

He describes the outlines of the Christian life as drawn by the Holy Spirit, giving the plans on which a life is to be built. As a matter of experience we see no man who is all black in motive, and no man all white. John looks at the man in his fundamental character as a child of God who is light, or as a child of the devil who is all darkness. In the present life we see the mistakes of the highest saint. Even Paul, in whom Christ dwelt, was only a man clothed with infirmity. We see the dark spots in the life of John (Mark 10 : 37). In like manner John has no middle ground between love and hate (2 : 10, 11). John sees the heart of things. The controlling principle of the believer is love, because God dwells in him in the center of this life. In time he will be dominated by love, the beginnings of which now dwell in him. That which is not love is hate. This will, in time, ripen into the absence of all love. In the moral world things go according to their tendencies. The tendency of the believer is toward love; the tendency of the unbeliever is toward hate.

John looks upon the Christian as a possessor of the truth. In time, undoubtedly, when Christ has finished his work in the believer, the creed and

the conduct will be in entire accord with Christ's revealed will. The Holy Spirit will create a holy life and a correct belief.

In the same manner we must interpret John's teachings concerning sin (2 : 9). The Christian is a Christian because he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit whose work is, of necessity, a holy work. The Christian man must, therefore, of necessity be a holy man of God. At the center of his being there is a love for God that is irreconcilable with a life in sin or a love for sin. This principle must ultimately result in a life that is beyond sin and sinning. John looks upon the Christian as one who has in him the principle of a sinless life. He therefore speaks of him as existing in that state now. At the present time no one, as a matter of fact, is in that state. John is looking at the Christian life and its opposite in the light of the ruling motives that characterize them. John is preeminently the idealist of the New Testament, though this method of presenting the truth is used by Paul. Writing in a general way of the Christian life, Paul declares that the believer has died to sin, has been buried out of sight, has risen to a resurrection life on the earth. (See Rom. 6 : 1-4.) This description is not actually true of any believer, but it is the ideal to which the Christian life is constantly approximating.

**NOTE 3. HERESIES OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE.** We must not think of the first centuries of the church as ages of undimmed piety and incorrupt doctrine. That the members brought into the churches would bring in traces of their former heathenism is not to be wondered at. The letters to the Corinthians show how much of this element was in the church, and how vigorous was the fight to keep the church pure in life (1 Cor. 6 : 9-11). The letters of Paul reveal the long and hard struggle to maintain the teaching of salvation by faith alone through Christ without the works of the law. In the letters of John other errors present themselves. Paul, years before, addressing the elders of the Ephesian church, had predicted the birth of dangerous heresies (Acts

20 : 30). The letters to Timothy at Ephesus, showed false teachings as widely prevalent (1 Tim. 1 : 3-7). We find the names of two of these false teachers (1 Tim. 1 : 20). In the letter to the church at Ephesus in the Revelation (2 : 6) there is allusion to a sect of Nicolaitans. This letter reveals an idolatrous and licentious element in their religious life. John, in his first and second letters (1 John 2 : 18; 2 John 7), speaks of deceivers in the world. It was asserted that to maintain the sinless nature of Jesus it must be affirmed that he did not possess a material organization. With this as an assumed truth large consequences follow as a matter of course. If Jesus had no real body, then there was no complete atonement wrought for sin, for there was no divine human person who suffered. Therefore also Jesus was not for us a perfect example, for he was not himself a person like ourselves who had passed through temptation. Jesus could be neither redeemer, mediator, nor brother. The effect of the denial of a real body to Jesus would be to make all knowledge uncertain. If the teachings of sight, hearing, and touch are worthless in establishing a belief in the real existence of an object there can be no foundation for any facts in nature, and all knowledge becomes a no-knowledge or an uncertainty. John lays great stress upon Jesus having come in the flesh (4 : 3), upon the reality of his person (1 : 1-3). In Timothy Paul alludes to a practical result of the admission that matter is sinful, in the forbidding of marriage (1 Tim. 4 : 3). If the body forms no part of the real self then, on the other hand, the commission of sensual excesses are not in themselves immoral, inasmuch as the body that commits these violations of law is not of itself any part of the real man. And, therefore, in the early ages it was maintained that it was not immoral for professing Christians to indulge in any desired bodily pleasures. An abominable licentiousness was the result of this teaching. It was vastly important for John to safeguard the reality of the person of Christ as well as his divinity, to maintain his existence in the flesh, to declare that with the giving up the real Christ that God himself would in reality be given up

(2: 29). The center of Christianity is Christ. To pervert the right teachings about Christ is to corrupt Christianity itself.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Sin is a wicked and destructive thing. It is not forced upon us from outside, but springs up from within. Its wilfulness makes its guilt (ver. 1).

2. It is a cause for rejoicing that Jesus has made provision for the forgiveness of sins. Every one in the world may say, Jesus died for me. No one is shut out from Christ's salvation unless he shuts himself out by his own unbelief and rejection of Christ (ver. 2).

3. Jesus did not cease to love and help men when he died on the cross. He is still concerned for men, especially for those who are his. We need no human mediators, no saints in heaven, no angelic intercession when we have Jesus as an ever-living advocate (ver. 2).

4. Right knowing should lead to right doing. Works are not the ground of justification, but the evidence of it (ver. 3).

5. A conformity to Christ who is the truth means far more than veracity, truth-telling. A man's life must be in harmony, not only with his confession, but with Christ's teachings and Christ's life (ver. 4).

6. Love to God is the only motive that can compel to a right keeping of God's commands. Fear may produce an outward keeping of God's laws; other motives may conspire to the same end. The law of God needs back of it the love of God (ver. 5).

7, 8. The death of Christ was a ransom, an atonement. Christ, in person, continues his work for the salvation and perfection of believers. The life of Christ in heaven furnishes a motive for comfort and an overcoming life (ver. 6). Duties in him arise from new motives, and are enforced by new examples (ver. 7).

9. Sin is darkness, holiness is light. In regeneration light, as a prevailing principle, comes into the heart, but all through the life the light is getting a new power in the life. Duty will have a stronger hold, the conscience will be more tender, sin will seem more ugly as the heart grows in grace (ver. 8).

10. Brotherly love is an evidence of love to God. But a mere philanthropy can never take the place of piety (ver. 9).

11. Life is a journey, needing open eyes and careful feet. Sin gives wrong views of life, dulls the understanding, blinds the eyes, leads to carelessness. Only a God-guided being can pass through life aright (ver. 11; Matt. 22: 13).

12. The forgiveness of sins is God's gift through Christ. Not even repentance alone can secure forgiveness apart from Christ. Forgiveness is never found apart from repentance, regeneration, adoption, a holy life (ver. 12).

13. Every age should cultivate the graces peculiar to it. Years of confession should impart strength of soul, a vigorous character, a larger knowledge (ver. 13).

14. Satan is strong. It requires a stronger one to overcome him. This the young disciple can do through Christ helping him. The young disciple will often have his hardest struggles at the beginning of the Christian life (ver. 14).

15. The unbeliever lives for the things that are seen, he is a man whose portion is in this life. The believer lives, or should live, for the unseen things—for Jesus, for the Father. The fitting occupant of the throne in the heart is God (ver. 15).

16. The world is unsatisfactory, passing, deceitful. He is a foolish man whose only wealth is material things (Luke 12: 20). The Christian must keep the world under his feet, not in his heart (ver. 16).

17. The Christian is living for an assured and indestructible future. Only the man who lives in and for Christ will share in God's blessedness (ver. 17).

18. The temptations to an ungodly life and to a corrupted teaching must be resisted. If overcome they will make the life stronger (ver. 18).

19. The most dangerous errors are those having a large admixture of truth. The most dangerous teachers are those who have, at some time, named Christ. Those errors which affect the deity of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, the salvation through Christ, the claims of morality upon the life, the reality of the future state of rewards and punishments, these are fundamental questions (ver. 19).

**3 BEHOLD**, what manner of love the | **3 BEHOLD** what manner of love the

20. Every Christian is an anointed priest and prophet. The Holy Spirit, if yielded to, will lead to a knowledge of the truth (John 16:13). Holiness is essential for a right knowledge of God's teachings (ver. 20).

21. Eternal life is a life begun here; it is a present possession (John 10:28). In its full sense it is completed and glorified on the other side (Matt. 19:29). Even Jesus was encouraged by the joy of the life to come (ver. 21; Heb. 12:2; 6:18).

22. The touchstone of right thinking and living is Christ (Luke 2:35). A confession with the heart and life brings a present ownership of the Father and the Son. He who does not confess Christ is, in reality, denying him (ver. 23).

23. Abiding in Christ is essential to safety and growth. Not the man who begins well, but the man who keeps on will attain the blessed life (ver. 24).

24. Satan and false teachers may tempt, but only the weakened nature can be led to yield. Little deviations from the truth should be guarded against. Jesus, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit, being held fast to, the feet will be in safety (ver. 26).

25. The anointing spoken of as vouch-safed to all Christians, is a permanent gift, leads to the truth, contributes to holiness and peace, and creates assurance, the privilege of all believers (ver. 27).

**PART TWO. THE RESULT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS HOLINESS.**  
Chap. 3-4 : 6.

Having considered the nature of fellowship with God, who is light, John now passes to consider the result of fellowship with God, which is holiness. The design of this holy fellowship with God is not the creation of peace and joy in the soul, though they are natural results, but something vastly larger and higher, the formation of a holy character. A fellowship with God that does not result in godlikeness is a fellowship only in seeming. The keyword of this section is found in 3:3, *even as he is pure*. The highest attribute in God is his holiness. His majesty might overawe us, but it would furnish no reason for worship. The highest quality in

the believer, in John's view, is a like holiness of character, a life that shall reflect God's character. The radical difference between the believer and the unbeliever is the holy character. That which constitutes heaven is not the gold or the pearl or the palm, but the pure heart.

### CHAPTER III.

The opening thought of this chapter follows closely the last verse of chap. 2. To be begotten of God (2:29) is to be a child of God; to be a child of God implies a likeness to God. Believers are now the children of God. This must inspire to holy living (ver. 1-8); holiness is the mark of the children of God, unholiness is the mark of the children of the devil (ver. 9-19); holiness will lead to brotherly love, banishing hatred (ver. 14-18); the holy life begets a confidence in the heart, dispelling doubt and fear (ver. 19-24).

**1-8. THE HIGH DESTINY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE DUTY OF KEEPING THEMSELVES PURE.** John develops the thought of sonship with its attendant results. Since God is so largely unknown by the world, the child of God will not be loved by the world. Because they are children there will come a complete likeness to Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, and a purification of the life that now is.

**1. Behold** calls attention to a marvelous statement now to be made. John had been a disciple for many years; in his old age the thought of God's personal relation to the believer awakens astonishment and admiration. **What manner.** God is a God of love. This is manifest in God's provision for the welfare of man. There is a love of God toward all men, manifest in the gift of the Son for their salvation (John 3:16). This is the love of redemption—God's love for the guilty, the undeserving, the needy, and apostate children of men. How great the love that, springing out of itself, sought the welfare and salvation of men, that gave the Son, that led to humiliation in the Son's life (Phil. 2:8). There is a great chasm between God's infinity and man's creaturely life, a greater

Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, 2 b because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and <sup>a</sup>it

Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knows us not, because it knew him 2 not. Beloved, now are we children of

<sup>g</sup> John 1 : 12; 2 Cor. 6 : 18.

<sup>h</sup> John 15 : 18, 19; 17 : 25.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. 8 : 15; Gal. 3 : 26.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. 8 : 18; 1 Cor. 13 : 12.

chasm between God's holiness and man's guilt, yet God sought and found man. This love is unique in its kind and in its degree. It is love itself, not some proof of it that is given. This love finds its expression in what follows. **Father.** John is not speaking of the relation of the Creator to his creatures whereby all are his children (*Acts 17 : 28*), whereby he is also called the "Father of spirits" (*Heb. 12 : 9*), but of that closer relation existing between the father and the child, with the spirit of sonship. **Bestowed.** This refers to the definite act whereby God gave himself to us in Christ. The incarnation, the entire work of the atonement, the gift of the Holy Spirit, are all included in this one bestowment. **Called.** To be called and to be are often used interchangeably in the Bible, but here the being called is contrasted with the being children in the same sentence. The aorist tense signifies that we have received once for all the title of children. **Sons,** rather, *children*. Paul uses the term sons; John, looking not so much at the process of adoption, but at the renewal of nature, uses the term children. The Revised version adds an expressive phrase at this point, *and such we are*. The designation of children is not an empty or fictitious one, it does not exist in name merely. They are called children, they are children. They are not simply adopted as such, they are born such. The point of view of John is different from that of Paul. According to Paul believers receive for Christ's sake the rights of children by adoption (*Gal. 4 : 5*). According to John the believer receives through Christ the child's nature. In Paul's view the old nature of man is transformed into the new; in John's view an altogether new principle of nature takes the place of the former. In the present life there is a vital relation between the believer and God. Sonship does not begin in heaven, it is completed there. There

is involved in the conception of childhood the idea of growth; the spiritual life begins with a spiritual infancy, and goes on to the stature of full manhood in Christ (*Eph. 4 : 13*). It is the highest honor that can come upon a person, the right to be called a child of God, to be such in reality. **Therefore**, rather, *for this cause*. The world does not understand the believer, his aims, purposes, plans, method of living, his joys and hopes. Jesus was misunderstood; the followers of Christ were regarded as enthusiasts. Carey, with his plan of world-wide missions, was a laughing-stock to the worldly wise men of his age. Even when violent persecution has passed away there will remain the settled antagonism of the world to the decided Christian. A fashionable and cultured world, not influenced by the spirit of Christ, can be an intolerant and persecuting world. Sneers and ridicule are as effective weapons of persecution as the stake and the jail. **The world**, as here used, is the world as fixed and hardened in sin. **Knew him not.** The him refers primarily to God who was manifested in Christ. Christians are not recognized or known because God is not recognized or known. See the words of Jesus (*John 15 : 18; 18 : 25*). The world, so long as it is under the control of the ungodly spirit, cannot know God (*Rom. 8 : 7*).

**2.** This verse repeats the statement of ver. 1, that there is a present sonship, and contains also the prophecy of a completed sonship. **Beloved** marks the beginning of an appeal to the sharers in this common love of God. Though the world did not recognize them, yet they were the children of God. As children they have a future. **Appear**, rather, *made manifest*. We look for an inheritance in character and surroundings not yet revealed. John had not seen what God would do for his children. Paul speaks of groanings in the present life

doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear,<sup>1</sup> we shall be like him; for <sup>in</sup> we shall see him as he is. <sup>2</sup> And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

God, and it was never yet manifested what we shall be. We know that if he be manifested, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.  
3 And every one, that has this hope on him, purifies himself even as he is

*I Ps. 11:15; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Peter 1:4.*

*m Matt. 5:8; John 17:24.*

*n 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Peter 3:14.*

that shall, in time, give way to a weight of glory (*Rom. 8:23*). John had spoken in 2:28 of the manifestation of God, he here resumes the same thought. **But . . . appear,** rather, *We know that if he shall be manifested.* The Revised version places *it* in the Margin. However much of indefiniteness may be about the future, we know that the manifestation of God in Christ will create a perfect conformity in body, soul, and spirit to his image. There was the promise of Jesus, which John had heard, that there should be a sight of the glorified Christ and fellowship with him (*John 17:24*). The sonship will be no more real than now, but it will be complete in character and in conditions. John does not indicate when this manifestation should occur. So far as the words themselves are concerned, they might be fulfilled in John's day or not for centuries afterward. The manifestation refers to the personal appearance of Jesus a second time. The term manifested implies his real existence at the present time. The glory desired by John is a spiritual character. **We shall be like him.** Everything else, all material conceptions of heaven, are unthought of. The design of the Christian life is a conformity to Christ (*Rom. 8:29*). Heaven is not so much place as condition. The likeness spoken of is not equality, nor absorption in the Godhead, nor identification, but similarity in character. **For.** This gives the reason for the spiritual conformity, a sight of God as he really is. The time at which, and the method by which the conformity will be realized, are both expressed. Purity of heart is essential to the sight of God (*Matt. 5:8*), and the sight of God, as he is, on the other hand, completes the glorification. No one can look upon God as he is in himself. (See *Exod. 33:20*; *1 Tim. 6:16*.) What capacities a glorified body may have we do not know. There is a physical sight of God that will bring no spiritual transformation (*Matt.*

*22:18; 25:31-46; Rev. 6:16*). As Jesus walked among men some were even repelled from a holy life, and became harder in nature. For the method of spiritual transformation here by a sight of the glorified Christ see *2 Cor. 3:18*. The sight of God here meant is a spiritual fellowship. In the unseen life no corrupted body will pull the soul down, no bad influences will weaken the holy desires, no environments will entice, the surroundings will inspire to a holy life and large impartations of grace will be given.

**3.** The effect of this hope of future glory will be evidenced in the present life. **Hope in him,** rather, *hope set on him.* The hope rests on him as on a foundation. The Christian life does not exhaust itself in dreams of heaven, but shapes the life that now is into accord with the life that is to be. **Purifieth.** This springs from a hope fixed on God. The will to do this springs from God's will inworking (*Heb. 13:21*). Apart from Christ nothing can be done (*John 15:5*). The life of purity means a will co-operating with God's will, responding to its claims. The term used here and in 1:9 means a cleansing from all spiritual uncleanness. The quality and extent of the purification is found in the phrase, **as he is pure.** This is both motive and rule. As all the allusions here are to the Father, it is better to refer this to him, meaning the essential divine element of purity which dwells primarily in God. John does not teach that this purity is attained in this life. It may be asserted that the tendency of this hope is toward purity in life; all who have this hope will aim to become holy; this hope will be consummated in time. The same kind of purity that makes heaven exists now in the believer; it will be enlarged in degree hereafter, and all impurities eliminated. All Christians should be holier than they are; the best Christians feel this the most. It is a mistake to affirm

**4** Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested <sup>a</sup>to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.  
**6** <sup>b</sup> Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; <sup>c</sup> whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. 7:7-13; James 2:9-11.      <sup>p</sup> 1:2.  
<sup>b</sup> John 15:4-7.

4 pure. Every one that commits sin commits transgression of law also; 5 and sin is transgression of law. And ye know that he was manifested that he might take away sins; and in him 6 is no sin. Every one that abides in him sins not; whoever sins has not seen him, nor does he know him.

<sup>q</sup> John 1:29; 1 Tim. 1:15.      <sup>r</sup> Isa. 53:9.  
<sup>t</sup> 2:4; 3 John 11.

sinlessness of the believer's life at the present; it leads to light views of sin; it is a greater mistake to feel that sinning is such a necessity of the present life that the believer remains in sin quiescently and contentedly. The believer must growingly regard sin as a hateful thing, to be fought against and overcome.

John now passes on in the development of the thought of purification to show that regeneration and sinning are incompatible in their nature. He considers this first as arising from our relation to Christ who was manifested to take away sin, and from our knowledge of him. He considers this second from the relation of sin to the devil with whom the Christian can have no fellowship. He considers the believer in his fundamental relation to Christ as the source of his spiritual life, and in his fundamental antagonism to Satan in whom is summed up, as it were, the evil in the world.

**4. Whoever . . . law,** rather, *every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.* Sin is looked upon as a real thing involving the action of the will—"doeth sin." It is something more than a condition or state of the mind, it is an actual doing. However decorous sin may be, it is in its very nature lawlessness and moral anarchy. John has already taught (2:29) that one begotten of God is righteous. Having thus dwelt on sonship with its consequent privileges and duties, he now comes back again to the thought of the manifestation of Christ the righteous. Christ came to make an atonement by which righteousness is rendered possible, and to live a life, making righteousness obligatory by his example. The Roman Catholic commentators make a mistake in referring this statement to what are called mortal sins in distinction from venial sins. John is

dealing with sin in its innermost nature; as such the statement is true of all sins.

**5. He who sins does so in violation of the entire purpose of Christ's manifestation.** *Ye know . . . take away . . . sins.* The coming of Christ had to do with sin, to atone for sin, that men might escape from its power and penalty, to remove actual sin from the heart (John 1:29). He came to take away sin because **in him is no sin.** There was in Christ a sinless nature, and therefore a sinless life.

**6. John gives his estimate of the character of the believer's life, the life of a child of God.** He defines the life in a negative way. **Sinneth not.** In ver. 7 he gives the positive side of the Christian life, "is righteous." *Whosoever . . . sinneth not.* John is speaking, as is his habit, of the ideal state of the Christian, of what it is in completeness. In this ideal state, bound as it is to Christ in a vital union, there is and can be no sin. There is implanted in the soul at regeneration certain divine principles which will, in time, render sin impossible. The life of God and the life in sin absolutely exclude each other. The man abiding in God must share in God's life. In baptism the believer confesses that he is dead to sin and is buried, as to his old nature, out of sight in the watery grave, and a new resurrection life at once emerges. The believer is then called upon to make actual in his life the ideal of which he has made confession (Rom. 6:4; 8:13). To abide in him, to know him, to be begotten of him, to be without sin are equivalent expressions. If any one sin this is the proof that one has not seen God, has not known God. Every sin committed is a proof that the nature is not yet entirely under the control of the light. For every defection forgiveness must

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: <sup>u</sup>he that doeth righteousness is righteous, <sup>x</sup>even as he is righteous. 8 <sup>y</sup>He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the

<sup>u</sup> 2:29; Ezek. 18:5-9; Rom. 2:13.

<sup>x</sup> Ver. 3; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.

<sup>y</sup> Matt. 13:38; John 8:44.

be sought and divine help implored against further defection. John is urging reasons against a life in sin by these considerations, sin is a violation of God's law (ver. 4); the object of the coming of Christ is to take away sin (ver. 5); those who are Christ's do not sin (ver. 6); those who sin are of the devil (ver. 8); there is in every believer a principle of true piety (ver. 9).

7. John is writing to counteract false teachings as in 2:26. **Children**, rather, *my little children*. **Deceive you**, rather, *lead you astray*. Various views have at times been held that would lead to erroneous teachings, as that holiness is not to be expected here, therefore one may live a careless moral life; that Christ came to relax the moral law; that bodily passions, lying outside of the soul, might be indulged without sin; that transgression consists in out-breaking sins only, not in the want of conformity to God's laws; that sins of infirmity and venial sins are not real sins. John declares that every one having the character of a righteous man must do the works of a righteous man. The righteous life is not an optional thing, but a moral necessity. **Doeth righteousness** is John's test of being righteous. The righteous man is one that is renewed in heart, forgiven, walking in conformity with God's law. Jesus laid the same emphasis upon doing (Matt. 7:16-23). Morality is an element of piety, but not the whole of it. **As he is righteous**. The quality of the righteousness of the believer is of the same kind as that which dwells in God, but far inferior in degree, in quantity. John here absolutely and unconditionally excludes all sin from the Christian life, asserts that it must correspond to the image of Christ in a complete righteousness. In what precedes, however, he has plainly said that the Christian life needs a purifying process (1:7). In opposition to all lax views concerning sin he brings out the full scope of what is involved in the essential nature and

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He that does righteousness is 8 righteous, even as he is righteous. He that commits sin is of the Devil; because the Devil sins from the begin-

idea of sin and righteousness to show, in all its majesty and power, the claims of the Christian life arising from fellowship with Christ. It is the same point of view presented by the Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:48). The Christian life as such is, in its very nature, a life of righteousness. Under this aspect no differences of moral gradation can be made, although in actual life such gradations are found to exist. It must follow, therefore, that every one begotten of God, in the determining influence of his life, must be entirely averse to sin. It is owing to the results of the former life in sin that the believer is not brought at once into a complete subordination to the will of Christ, and that disturbances arise in the moral life.

8. The apostle has shown that being begotten of God involves a righteous life; he now shows further that a sinful life involves, of necessity, a moral fellowship with the devil. **Committeth**, rather, *doeth*. Sin, whether inward or outward, is regarded as an act, a something done wilfully. Even a disposition of character, as something held fast to, is looked upon as a commission of sin. The expression, *doing sin*, indicates a permanent, fixed disposition of character, diametrically opposed to the doing of righteousness, which is the mark of the Christian life. **Of the devil**, is in contrast with "of God," in ver. 10. John declares that all whose fixed disposition is sinful are in moral kinship with the devil. It is also true of the believer that in so far as he sins he comes under the temporary influence of the devil. See the words of Jesus in Matt. 16:23. There is a personal devil, at the opposite moral pole from God. Through him sin entered the moral universe, through him the human race was corrupted. All sin is, therefore, an imitation of Satan; all who sin are moved by the impulses that move him. Satan stands as the representative of sin; those who sin are bound to him by spiritual ties. John

beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, <sup>2</sup> that he might destroy the works of the devil. <sup>3</sup> Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for <sup>b</sup> his seed remaineth in him: <sup>c</sup> and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

ning. To this end the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the 9 works of the Devil. Whoever has been begotten of God does not commit sin: because his seed abides in him: and he can not sin, because he has

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 3 : 15; Luke 10 : 18; John 16 : 11; Heb. 2 : 14.  
<sup>a</sup> 5 : 1, 4, 18.      <sup>b</sup> 1 Peter 1 : 23.      <sup>c</sup> Matt. 7 : 18; Rom. 6 : 2.

does not favor any dualism—the belief in two eternally existing principles of good and evil; a belief that had wide currency in the early ages. He presents a contrast between the two fathers and the two kinds of children animated by influences corresponding to the character of the fathers. It is a willing, not an enforced subjection. **For this purpose**, rather, *to this end*. The object of the incarnation was to reconcile all things to God (Col. 1 : 20). This involved the removal of all hindrances, the destruction of Satan's hold upon men. **Destroy the works.** There is a personal agency of Satan in leading men astray, in begetting sins of all kinds (Gal. 5 : 19-21), in blinding the eyes of men (2 Cor. 4 : 4), in alienating the mind from God, in perverting men's conceptions of God (Gen. 5). As Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan, it is not possible for one of God's children to be in alliance with the opponent of Christ. Christ is Redeemer, Satan is destroyer. Apollyon, one of the names of Satan, signifies the destroyer (Rev. 9 : 11). Jesus came to build the foundation of his kingdom on the ruins of Satan's kingdom. Only that man who renounces all sin can share in the work of Christ, can live in accord with the purpose for which Christ came into the world. Christ's triumph means a Satan bruised and under foot (Rom. 16 : 20). Christ and the Christian must be equally antagonistic to Satan, and equally triumphant over him.

**9-13. HOLINESS IS THE MARK OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL.** There is a radical difference between those who are the children of God and those who are the children of the devil. It is a difference arising from a difference in controlling principles.

**9.** John defines the character of the believer as one **born of God**, rather,

**begotten.** Of him it is affirmed, as his essential characteristic, he **does not commit sin**, rather, *does no sin*. So irreconcilable is God's nature to sin that it is impossible for the child of God to sin. **Cannot sin.** In ver. 6 it was stated that the one abiding in God does not sin. It is now stated that a birth from God begets a life in which sin cannot exist, for the existence of sin in a God-begotten child would be, in reality, to make God the author of sin. The statement is universal in its nature. **Whosoever.** The **seed** is the principle of the divine life implanted, the permanent change in the governing disposition. The idea is that it has in it the power of growth, gradually controlling the entire life. It is an abiding transformation. **Remaineth**, rather, *abideth*. **Cannot sin** does not refer to physical but to moral impossibility. God cannot deny himself, his own supremely holy nature restrains him (2 Tim. 2 : 13). The only sin that John considers possible to the real Christian is an act which he mourns over as soon as recognized as sin, which, through the intercession of the Advocate, is forgiven, and is not followed by the withdrawal of the Spirit, as the ruler of the inner life. The truly regenerate life will find sin more and more incompatible with itself as the life approaches the ideal state. Just in proportion as the divine life penetrates the human life it will be as impossible for the believer to sin as it is for the angel or the Redeemer of men. We must join the statements of ver. 6, 8, 9 into a harmonious relation with the passages in 1 : 8 and 2 : 1. John cannot intend to contradict himself within the space of a few inches. These passages must be interpreted to explain each other.

**10.** This verse gives a test by which the children of God may be distinguished from the children of the devil.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. <sup>a</sup> Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, <sup>b</sup> neither he that loveth not his brother.

*Brotherly love essential to Christian character —its evidences and fruits.*

11 FOR <sup>c</sup>this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, <sup>d</sup>that we 12 should love one another. Not as <sup>e</sup>Cain,

10 been begotten of God. In this are manifest the children of God, and the children of the Devil. Every one that does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother;

11 because this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we 12 should love one another. Not as Cain

*d 2: 29; 3 John 11.*

*e 2: 9, 10; 4: 8.*

*f 1: 5; 2: 7, 8.*

*g John 13: 34.*

*h Gen. 4: 4-15.*

In society the children of God and unbelievers are mingled together. John's aim is to show how they may be distinguished from each other. **Manifest** has reference to God, who sees the heart in its innermost workings, also to men who may judge of the character by the conduct. The *doing righteousness* and the *doing sin* are the marks respectively of the children of God through regeneration and the children of the devil. It is worthy of notice that unbelievers are never said to be begotten of the devil, they are his children by identity of character and imitation. **In this** refers to the concluding clause of this verse. The mark of the believer has been shown to be the *doing righteousness* (ver. 7). It is now further shown that the mark of the unbeliever is *doeth not righteousness*. He consequently is not of God. There is now added, in the development of the thought of unrighteousness, that one of its main elements is the lack of brotherly love. John is writing against those who made pretensions to piety and knowledge, but lacked a religious life that controlled their relations to each other. True religion embraces both God and man, so that no one can be right toward God who is not at the same time right toward his fellow-man. He does not intend to declare that brotherly love is synonymous with righteousness, but no one can be righteous who does not manifest this through brotherly love. It is to be noted that John makes but two classes of men, referring both classes back to their controlling principles. He has no room for any middle or neutral class of people. This must be a guide to us in all our interpretation of John's writings. He does not describe men as he actually sees

them, with all gradations of character shading into each other imperceptibly, but he seizes hold of the essential principle of the life, love to God or imitation of the devil. The **brother** spoken of is not here the universal human race, but a brother in the household of God. The Christian is under a deeper obligation to a fellow-disciple than to one not of the household of faith (Gal. 6: 10). The latter part of this verse serves as an introduction to a further discussion of this subject.

**11.** This verse furnishes a proof that the absence of love for the brethren shuts a person out from the family of God. No one can love the Father and not love the Father's child, a brother by virtue of a common relation to God.

**Message.** We are reminded by this term of the message in 1: 7 defining God as a God of light. That was a fundamental teaching in reference to God. This is a fundamental reference in relation to men. A new commandment is spoken of in 2: 7. This message is the substance of that commandment, given from God at the first, enforced by new motives, and illustrated in a new way by Jesus and brought to the people by their early religious teachers. The teaching of the apostles embraced a correct theology — right conceptions about God; and a pure ethics — right relations toward men.

**Beginning.** This refers to the beginning of the Christian dispensation. Brotherly love is one of the essential elements of the Christian teaching. John's expression is very forcible, literally, "in order that we love one another." The purpose of the apostolic teaching is defeated if brotherly love be not the practical outcome.

**12.** The opposite of brotherly love is hate, as represented by **Cain**. **Not**

*who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life,* <sup>a</sup> because

*was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Wonder not, brethren, if the world hates you.*

**14** *We know that we have passed out of*

<sup>a</sup> Heb. 11 : 4

<sup>b</sup> John 15 : 18, 19; 2 Tim. 3 : 12.

<sup>c</sup> Eph. 2 : 1.

*m* 4 : 7, 9, 12; Matt. 25 : 40; Eph. 1 : 15.

*. . . brother, rather, not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. Brotherly love is contrasted with hate, there being no intervening disposition. Where love and unselfishness are wanting, there hate and selfishness reign. John presents hatred, not in its beginnings, but in its consummation when it ripens into murder. The root of murder is hate, the absence of love. All hatred, in the New Testament view, has in it potential murder. Cain and Abel are the first Old Testament representatives of the unbelieving and the believing life. Because Cain was of the evil one he hated Abel. There is an abiding antagonism between righteousness and unrighteousness. This is an illustration of John's expressive phrases: doing sin, doing unrighteousness, being a child of the devil, being not of God, hating the brother, slaughtering the brother, all of them being differing forms of the one thought.*

**13.** The apostle makes an inference for all ages from the unbrotherly act of Cain. **My brethren**, omit *my*. In all ages there will be the same relation of the believer to God and of the world to the evil one that was represented in the personal lives of Cain and Abel. These abiding relationships will beget a like righteousness and unrighteousness. Therefore believers ought not to be surprised if hatred should be felt toward them. See the words of Jesus on this point (John 15 : 17, 18). (The relation of Cain and Abel is an illustration of the relation of the world to the believer.) The term **world** indicates those who have a fixed, inveterate opposition to Christ. In this manner Jesus and Paul make use of the term **world** (John 15 : 18; Rom. 12 : 2). The absence of love means hate; and hate means, when it has come to its logical development, murder; and murder means the absence of eternal life (*ver. 15*).

**14-18. A MARK OF HOLINESS WILL BE LOVE FOR EACH OTHER.** To love is a mark of life. To hate is an infallible mark of abiding in death. God is light, God is life, God is love. To love is to be in the light, is to have life.

**14.** It has been shown in ver. 10 that a distinguishing mark of the child of God is a love for the brethren. The distinguishing mark of the world is hate. This hate of the world comes upon the believer (*ver. 13*). It is now shown again that the mark of the transition from death to life is a love for the brethren. The **we** is emphatic, though hated by the world we are in fellowship with God. **Have passed**, in the perfect tense, shows the complete and permanent passage into the new spiritual relationship. God's work in regeneration through the Holy Spirit was manifest in the conscious free choice by which Christ and his work were accepted. **Death** marks the state out of which they have come, the state of spiritual alienation from God. Not to have God's fellowship is to be dead (Eph. 2 : 1; 1 Tim. 5 : 6). Life means far more than existence, it means a blessed life springing from God, in fellowship with God, finding its goal in God. Love for the brethren is not the cause of this passage from death to life, but the mark and proof of it. There is here expressed a conscious and full assurance of salvation; an assurance reserved not for the apostle alone, but for all disciples. This love is not a general love for all, but a holy love for the redeemed as such. It is a love for His sake (Matt. 25 : 31-46). Jesus commanded such a spirit (John 13 : 35). It is a sad feature of the Christian life when Christians persecute fellow-Christians, because they do not follow Christ in a manner assumed to be the only right manner. Consult Vedder's "History of the Baptists" to see the

we love the brethren. <sup>a</sup> He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

15 <sup>b</sup> Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

16 <sup>c</sup> Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.

17 <sup>d</sup> And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But <sup>e</sup> whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, <sup>f</sup> how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little

death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not abides in death. Every one that hates his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. In this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoever has the world's sustenance, and beholds his brother having need, and shuts up his pity from him, how abides the love of God in him?

18 Little children, let us not love in

<sup>a</sup> 2 : 9, 11.<sup>b</sup> See Gen. 27 : 41; Matt. 5 : 21, 22.<sup>c</sup> Gal. 5 : 21; Rev. 21 : 8.<sup>d</sup> John 15 : 13; Acts 20 : 28; Rev. 1 : 5.<sup>e</sup> 4 : 11; Rom. 16 : 4; Phil. 2 : 17, 30.<sup>f</sup> Deut. 15 : 7-11; Isa. 58 : 7-10; Luke 3 : 11.<sup>g</sup> 4 : 20.

persecutions that came upon sincere witnesses for a New Testament church life, in Switzerland, in Germany, Holland, England, and in our country. Every century has witnessed this lack of brotherly love. **He . . . brother,** rather, *he that loveth not.* This refers to the absence of the spirit of love in general, and is not limited to love for believers. Not to love is to dwell in death, in hate, away from God.

**15.** This verse emphasizes the thought of the preceding verse, and carries it to its logical conclusion. Not to love is to hate; to hate is, when it comes to its full growth, murder. John does not intend to say that no one having committed murder can be forgiven and saved, but while one has a heart of murder there can be no divine life in the soul. The case of Cain is yet in John's mind. (See the words of Jesus, John 8 : 44.) **Ye know** shows the Christian consciousness to which John appeals for a right verdict on this statement. The word **remaining** does not show that the murderer had eternal life and lost it, but is simply a general assertion that this man in whom murderer dwells does not have the divine life.

**16.** The apostle presents the supreme example of love—that of Jesus in his self-sacrifice for men. We are carried back in thought to the first verse, "Behold, what manner of love." From Cain and human hate he passes to notice the pure life and love of Jesus. **Hereby . . . God,** rather, *hereby know we love.* We find love in its essence, its complete manifestation in the love of Christ. **He** refers to Jesus. It is an impressive expression, as though all would understand, without

the mention of the name, that Jesus only could be meant. **Know** is the intellectual deduction from a survey of the love of Christ; there is included also a heart knowledge, as no one could understand Christ's love without experiencing it. Christ's love for us must be changed into a like love in us for others. His self-sacrifice for us must create in us the spirit of self-sacrifice for others. The spirit of Christ will always carry a cross.

**17.** There is in brotherly love the spirit of the Good Samaritan, helpfulness to the needy. Jesus fed the multitude (Matt. 15 : 32); Dorcas helped the needy (Acts 9 : 36); Jesus makes helpfulness, for his sake, a test of salvation (Matt. 25 : 35). The strong must help the weak, not only in spiritual matters, but in counsel, in material aid. Jesus and the Twelve, in their poverty, helped those who were poorer (John 13 : 29). Notice also the sympathy of the Gentile Christians for the poor saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16 : 1). If we must lay down even our lives, how much more must we consider the smaller, the physical needs. **Shutteth . . . bowels,** rather, *shutteth up his compassion.* To the Hebrew mind *bowels* expresses what we mean by heart. **How . . . him,** rather, *how doth the love of God abide in him?* Put as a question it is a strong assertion that the life of piety, the life dwelling in God, must be one of helpfulness, in all ways. The world's goods must be used for doing good. Neither orthodoxy alone nor a morality alone will save; true piety is the love for men that springs from love to God.

**18.** John appeals for a sincere, truth-

children, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

19 And hereby we know \*that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. \*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our 21 heart, and knoweth all things. \*Be-

word, neither with the tongue; but in 19 deed and truth. In this we shall know that we are of the truth, and we shall 20 assure our heart before him, whatever our heart may condemn us for, because God is greater than our heart, and 21 knows all things. Beloved, if our

*u* Ezek. 33:31; Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

*z* John 8:9; 1 Cor. 4:4.

*x* 1:8; John 18:37.

*a* Job 27:6.

*y* Heb. 6:10, 11.

ful life and love. Jesus loved in tongue, in word, in deed. **Deed** is opposed to the profession which amounts to nothing; **truth** is opposed to that which is seeming and unreal. Christ kept nothing back in his gift; the Christian must love in the same way, moved by the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

**19-24. THE CONFIDENCE OF THE HOLY LIFE.** Having distinguished between truth and appearance in respect of love, requiring the love which is truth, John now connects this with the general statement that the entire Christian life must have its root in truth. Character and conduct must be in accord with sincerity and knowledge; there must be no seeming, no hypocrisy. The believer must belong to the kingdom of reality, and be in accord with Him who is the truth. And this would beget in the believer a confidence and assurance of heart; a confidence that would dispel doubt and fear. A true brotherly love is a test of the Christian state.

**19. And hereby,** rather, *hereby*. The reference is to what has gone before, the fulfilment of the exhortation to love in reality. The presence of a true love for others and a willingness to make sacrifices will beget the spirit of assurance. **Know,** rather, *shall we know.* This is a natural consequence of the state of mind spoken of. **Of the truth.** This does not mean merely that they are really what they appear to be, but they are begotten by the truth even as they have been begotten of God. **Assure our hearts.** The assurance spoken of will be able to still the misgivings of the heart that arise from the remembrance of defects and failures in the life. Peter appealed to the larger knowledge of Jesus as a source of justification (John 21:17). **Before him** does not allude to the future

judgment, but to the continued presence of Christ or God before whom the life is lived. The value of a calm consciousness in harmony with itself is seen in this that even in his presence is there confidence (Rom. 8:34). The term **hearts**, rather, *heart*, as used in John, is about equivalent to conscience as used by Paul, when he speaks of the thoughts of men accusing or excusing them (Rom. 2:15). There will be conscious imperfections in the believer's life, but he may know whether his love for God and for others is sincere, and whether his desire is to live in conformity with God's will. Assurance is not of the essence of salvation, but it is a source of strength and inspiration for Christian activity. No other writing in the New Testament uses the term *know* so many times as this letter. It is designed for the cultivation of Christian assurance. A Christly spirit within will not fear a Christ upon the throne.

**20. For if . . . condemn,** rather, *whereinsoever our heart condemns us.* This must be joined closely with the preceding verse. In the presence of a holy law, commanding perfection, there will be a conscious imperfection (1:8; 2:1). Sins of omission and commission will be remembered. These taken in and by themselves will bring condemnation upon the heart; the conscience will reaffirm the condemnation of God's law. From the condemnation of a lower tribunal there is an appeal to a higher. **God . . . all things,** rather, *because God . . . things.* This furnishes the reason for the heart's assurance. From the conscious infirmity and imperfection of the individual heart the believer may fall back upon the love and mercy of one who is infinitely greater, and therefore more tender than our self-condemning heart. The entire passage is consolatory in

loved, if our heart condemn us not,  
**then** have we confidence toward God.  
 22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive  
 of him, because we keep his command-  
 ments, <sup>a</sup>and do those things that are  
 23 pleasing in his sight. <sup>b</sup>And this is his  
 commandment, That we should be-  
 lieve on the name of his Son Jesus  
 Christ, <sup>c</sup>and love one another, as he

heart condemn us not, we have con-  
 fidence toward God. And whatever  
 we ask, we receive from him, because  
 we keep his commandments, and do  
 the things that are pleasing before him.  
 23 And this is his commandment, that we  
 should believe on the name of his Son  
 Jesus Christ, and should love one an-  
 other, as he gave us commandment.

*b* 2: 28; *Heb.* 10: 22.

*c* Ps. 34: 15-17; *Matt.* 21: 22.

*d* John 9: 21.

*e* John 6: 29; *Acts* 16: 31.

*f* John 13: 34.

its nature. God's omniscience will not be an enemy, but a friend to the believer. Our little hearts have compassion for a suffering brother. God's greater heart will have an infinite compassion toward us in a life of conscious sincerity.

21. He indicates the blessed results of the persuasion spoken of in ver. 19, 20. These results are a confidence of heart and an assured answer to prayer. **Condemn us not.** This refers to a final conclusion in the heart, sitting in judgment on itself, looking over all the circumstances of our infirmities and God's larger mercy. Faith has triumphed over a self-condemning despair. John alludes to a state of mind expressed by Paul. "For I know nothing against myself" (1 Cor. 4: 4). The confidence of the believer has been brought about by the consoling and indwelling Holy Spirit (ver 24). **Then . . . God,** rather, we have boldness toward God. **Boldness** is a favorite word of John, used four times in this letter (2: 28; 4: 17; 5: 14). Twice it expresses his confidence of hope in reference to a day of judgment; twice it is used in reference to prayer. It corresponds in meaning to Paul's use of the term, full assurance. As the believer draws near God in prayer and in fellowship, it is not with a slavish fear, but with the confident feeling of a child (Rom. 8: 15). God is not so much the great God as the loving Father. The not condemning is the negative side, the boldness toward God is the positive side of the believer's life.

22. Believers, whose life is of the truth, conscious of no disturbance of their filial relation to God through unfaithfulness on their part, may ask all things from their Father in child-like confidence and trust. **Whatso-**  
**ever we ask.** This statement is in accord with the words of Jesus (John

14: 13; 15: 7). John speaks with the utmost confidence; he had tested the promise through many years. There are always limitations to the seemingly unlimited promises, as that there must be faith (Mark 11: 24); the thing desired must be in accord with the will of God (5: 14). A reason assigned for the answer to the prayer, is that the believer is in harmony with God, obedient, well pleasing to him. In proportion as one approaches that state these words are true.

23. The entire duty of the believer is summed up in the two aspects, to believe in Jesus and to love the brethren. The one expresses the inner life, the other the outer life. The commandment contains all others, embracing the unity of faith and love. Faith rests on Jesus, love on the brother. **On the name,** rather, *in.* In John's Gospel allusion is made ninety-eight times to believing; the term repentance is not once used. The sense of sin, repentance, confession, all lead to and find expression in faith in the Son of God. The reference here is to the entire person of Christ, including his work and his words, involving also the confession of Christ. **Son** reveals the relation to God, showing the divinity of his person. **Jesus** is the human designation, giving his name among men. **Christ** is the title, showing the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures. **Love one another.** Piety and morality cannot live without each other. God commands us to believe in his Son; Jesus commands us to love each other. Faith without works is dead, works without faith do not commend us to God. John urges first to a right attitude toward Jesus then a right action toward others.

24. The result of obedience to God is a blessed and mutual indwelling of

24 gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

*g 4:12; John 14:21-23; 15:10.*

*h John 17:21, etc.*

*i 4:13; Rom. 8:9-17.*

the believer in God and God in him. **Abiding in him** has been spoken of before in this letter (2:6, 27, 28; 3:6). The believer abides in him for safety, security, guidance, eternal life, joy, blessedness, peace.

**NOTE 1. THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST,** 3:5. It is needful to maintain the spotlessness of the character of Christ. Only in this way can we maintain the divinity of his nature and his fitness to be a mediatorial sacrifice. His sinlessness is maintained by all the New Testament writers in a formal or in an incidental way. The book of Hebrews shows the superiority of his priesthood in that he was not forced to make an offering for himself (Heb. 7:26). John the Baptist regarded him as the bearer of the world's sins (John 1:29). Peter speaks of him as a lamb without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19). Paul speaks of Jesus as dying for the ungodly, asserting for him a perfect godliness (Rom. 5:6). The strongest proof of Christ's sinlessness is found in his attitude toward God. Other good men like Payson, Judson, Brainerd, Spurgeon have been burdened in their confessions and prayers with a sense of their own infirmities. Jesus never betrays any sense of his own sin, though he reprobates others. He worships God, but he makes no confession of wrong-doing. He asserts that he is always well pleasing to God (John 8:29). He says that Satan finds nothing in him (John 14:30). He was tempted in all points as we are, without sin. Bushnell's sermon on the impossibility of classifying Jesus among men, and Ullman's "Sinlessness of Jesus" are very valuable helps to the understanding of the sinless character of Christ.

**NOTE 2. SINLESSNESS IN THE PRESENT LIFE,** 3:9. Taken by itself 1:8 teaches that sin inheres in every Christian life upon the earth, that complete holiness comes only at the vision of Christ (3:2). Taken by itself 3:9 teaches

24 And he that keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in him. And in this we know that he abides in us, from the Spirit which he gave us.

that the presence of sin in the heart is a proof that one belongs to the kingdom of Satan. Neither passage must be sacrificed in order that the other may have its natural meaning. The Romish church divides sins into two classes, mortal and venial sins. Wesley discriminates between sins, calling those only sins in a proper sense which are deliberate violations of known laws. These theories are inconsistent with the Scripture teachings concerning sin in regarding as sins only the wilful, designed violations of law. Any violation of God's law is sin. Paul did not judge himself sinless (1 Cor. 4:4). The struggle portrayed in Rom. 7 shows the efforts of a saintly man to become more saintly. That the believer is commanded to live a life beyond sin is evident. God as a holy God can give no lower command than this. As a holy God he cannot make a compromise with sin and command a moderately holy life. John is here describing not the average Christian life, but the life as it ought to be; as it might be through Christ's help; as it will, in time, be in the future. These words of John not only are a description of what each life ought to be, but they serve also as an appeal to live up to this standard. In like manner Paul writes to the Roman Christians, "You are dead, you are buried to the old life, you have been raised in the life that now is to a spiritual resurrection estate" (Rom. 6:4). And then afterward as showing that the ideal state had not been realized by these same persons he writes, "Inasmuch as you are ideally dead, put to death the sinful things that yet remain in you" (Rom. 8:13). Every believer should aim day by day to live a sinless life. The unattainable should be striven for. And then day by day, realizing that the flesh is weak, he will need to pray for forgiveness and help.

**NOTE 3. EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE,** 3:16. John's first

letter seems designed to give answer to the question, How may a person know whether he is a child of God? Inasmuch as there is no organization that can infallibly know the heart, as there is no voice from heaven or vision that can speak for God, it is needful to have tests by which the intelligent believer may examine his own heart and life. Creed statements and emotions are not sufficient. John gives no less than eight specific tests of the regenerate life. (1) In 2 : 29 he writes, "Every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him." A holy life is the test of godliness. The fruits of the Spirit are manifest in the life (*Gal. 5 : 22, 23*). (2) In 3 : 9 he writes, "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin." The life, in its nature, is like Christ's. There will be a permanent break with sin as a ruling power, and a constant growth toward the sinless life in Christ. A person may judge whether there is a growing conformity to Christ and a growing hatred of wrong-doing. (3) In 3 : 14 he writes, "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." A brotherly love is a test of the new relation to Christ. The Spirit makes a spiritual kinship that is closer than blood relationship (*Matt. 12 : 50*). (4) In 4 : 7 he writes, "And every one that loveth is begotten of God." Here the love takes a wider range, involving a love for God, for good things, for service, for others, even for enemies. God is love itself—the Christian is also love. (5) In 4 : 15 he writes, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him." A clear recognition and confession of Jesus as the divine one is an evidence of the new life. A real, not a theoretical, knowledge of Jesus, is implied. A book like "*Ecce Homo*," ignoring the higher nature of Jesus, is essentially anti-christian. (6) In 5 : 1 he writes, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." The confession of the Messiahship of Jesus is a mark of the new relation to God through Christ. It is not the mere verbal confession that Jesus is the Messiah, but the heart knowledge, the believing on Jesus as the fulfilment of the divine plan unfolded in the Old Testament. (7) In 5 : 4 he writes, "For whatsoever

is begotten of God overcometh the world." The test of a Christian life is that it is a conquering life. It overcomes self, besetting sins, the temptations of the world, the wiles of Satan. (8) In 5 : 18 he writes, "But he that was begotten of God keepeth himself." He is kept by God, is safe in his hands (*John 10 : 28*). In like manner the believer, because he is a believer, keeps guard over himself. He does not expose himself to temptations, does not walk in the way of danger to the soul. The regenerate life as such has its fitting manifestations. By its fruits it must be known. Nowhere in the range of the inspired writings are given so many practical tests of the regenerate life as in this short letter.

**NOTE 4. JOHN'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT, 3 : 24.** John had heard the promise of Jesus that the Holy Spirit would be bestowed that he might convict of sin, create holiness in the heart, and lead into the truth (*John 16 : 13*). John speaks of the Spirit as granted to them at a definite time (*5 : 24*). The indwelling Spirit would create a desire to keep God's commands and bestow the ability to keep them. In this way the Spirit would be a constant indwelling witness of God's presence (*Rom. 8 : 16*). This gift of the Spirit does not refer to special endowment, but is regarded as a common and abiding possession, given to all who are Christ's followers. The indwelling Spirit would work in two practical ways, in the perfection of holiness in the life, and also in preserving the truth of Christ free from error (*2 : 26, 27*). Orthodoxy in thinking about Christ John emphasizes. Wrong conceptions about the person and work of Christ will shape all the views in reference to Christianity and, in time, will shape the practical life. Holiness in living, in the long run, depends on right thinking. John insists that the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, given at the entering on the Christian life, ought to be a protection for the Christian life, ought to be a protection against error. The Holy Spirit should be as real a teacher as John or Paul (*2 : 27*). This was the promise of Jesus (*John 16 : 13*). How can these words be reconciled with the

inconsistencies of conduct and belief? There ought, as a matter of fact, to be a growing knowledge of Jesus and his teachings. False teachers ought to have no hold upon the intelligent believer. Varying statements of doctrine might be made and different explanations given of the facts underlying Christianity, but in the main, the one common mold of doctrine ought to be held (*Rom. 6:17*), the common form of sound words ought to be maintained (*2 Tim. 1:13*). There ought to be no mysticism that lays undue stress upon the Spirit's inner teaching, but ignores the outward facts of revelation, the Bible, the church, and its ordinances. There ought to be no denial of the Deity of Christ as in Unitarianism among those who rely on him for salvation. There ought to be no baptismal regeneration emphasizing a rite as the means of salvation. There ought to be no infant baptism in plain violation of the words of the Lord Jesus (*Mark 16:16*; *Matt. 28:19*). There ought to be no prelacy, an ecclesiastical organization that usurps the power of Christ, denying the simplicity of the New Testament government. Universalism finds its existence in denying or ignoring large sections of the Saviour's teachings. Errors will arise if persons come to the New Testament with opinions already formed, if they seek the Bible to get its blessing on views held, instead of asking the Bible what they must believe. It is presupposed by John in his teachings here, that the heart is open to conviction, walking in the light already seen, desiring to know the truth that it may be followed, submitting all views to the Scripture for final decision, that due diligence is used in finding out what are the teachings of the Bible. If these conditions are wanting then, by necessity, the promise falls to the ground.

When serious inroads have been made upon the churches as by laying undue stress upon the act of baptism in securing the remission of sins, the explanation is that there has not been such a reception of all the facts in the case as to preserve from error. When large sections of the church have accepted infant baptism as the rule of church life, the explanation is that they have rested on the power of tra-

dition and false views of baptism that made such a baptism seem almost a necessity for the saving of the souls of the dead. If all in the church were living lives of holiness, sincerely desirous of knowing the truth, searching the Scriptures that God's thoughts might be known, walking in the truth so far as known, it cannot be doubted that this promise of preservation from error would be fulfilled in a way that has never yet been witnessed. Here, as everywhere, in John's writings, he is looking, not at the church life as it actually exists, but as it ought to be, might be; he is regarding not so much the actual church as the ideal church as it is defined in the word and outlined in Christ's commands concerning it. The church has two teachers. It has the living Christ revealed in the New Testament and the living Holy Spirit in the heart interpreting the word, clarifying the mind, giving a spiritual vision. The believer must not ignore either teacher. The Friends, relying on the Spirit, belittle the outward institutions of Christianity; others, relying on the outward facts of Christianity, do not sufficiently recognize the Spirit as a present teacher and helper.

For a discussion of the work of the Spirit consult Hare's "Mission of the Comforter," and the "Ministry of the Spirit," by A. J. Gordon.

#### FRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. It is wonderful that the great and holy God should pour out his love on sinful men. It is a love wonderful in its quality and in its quantity. God's highest love and wisdom are manifest, not in creation, but in redemption (ver. 1).

2. The Christian is to be in the world, but not of it. He is to be spiritually minded. All things in life are to be held in subordination to the will of Christ and the interests of the soul (ver. 1).

3. The best part of the Christian's life is in the future, he is the child of a king. All things at present are in his possession in part (*1 Cor. 3:21*). In the future the life will be in glory (ver. 2).

4. The sight of Christ will create Christ-likeness. Then the longings for holiness will be satisfied (ver. 2).

5. A hope of heaven should make a heavenly mindedness. The work of purification, begun at conversion, should be daily continued. Piety, purity, and heaven go together (ver. 3).

6. Sin may seem very decorous, but in its essence it is a breaking of God's laws. Every man by nature is a sinner and a lawbreaker (ver. 4).

7. Jesus had no sin, therefore he can take away sin. He takes away the nature of sin, the power and love of sin, and the penalty of sin. He is a complete Saviour. Sin is the opposite of the salvation that Christ brings (ver. 5).

8. To be a Christian means to hate sin. The more one becomes like Christ, the less power will sin have over him. One who does not hate sin, and have a growing power over it, has no right to regard himself as a Christian (ver. 6).

9. A person may be deceived by false tests of the Christian life, by emotions, happy dreams, or successful work. The real test of the life is right-doing, a daily and growing conformity to the holy will of Christ (ver. 7).

10. The Saviour and Satan are at the opposite moral extremes. Jesus means a confirmed holiness, Satan means a fixed ungodliness. It is well to ask in what direction the life is growing (ver. 8).

11. To be born of God implies a permanent change in the governing disposition. Sonship implies obedience, family likeness, conformity to God's will. To be a child of such a Father is a privilege and an inspiration also to a higher life (ver. 9).

12. The Christian ought to live a life that can be known as Christ's. There ought to be a separation between the church and the world in the motives and governing principles of life and conduct. The Christian must be above the world that he may influence it (ver. 10).

13. Cain built for himself a monument that stands through the centuries. The ugly disposition and the sudden angry impulse ripened into murder. Back of Cain was the unseen Satan. The same principles in the heart will beget a Cain-life to-day (ver. 12).

14. The world at large hated Jesus. Persecutions will pass away with enlightenment, but sin, worldliness, Satan, the

evil heart of unbelief are always antagonistic to Christ and his cause (ver. 13).

15. The Christian must love fellow-Christians because he loves Christ. Jesus loved his disciples better than his flesh and blood kinsmen. Spiritual ties are enduring (ver. 14).

16. Hatred is not a trifling sin, it cannot exist in the heart with eternal life. Hatred can be crowded out only by an incoming love (ver. 15).

17. We must imitate Christ in love and sacrifice for others. He loved even unto death. A lifelong regard for others is equal to a martyrdom (ver. 16).

18. There must be orthodoxy in creed. There must be a like orthodoxy in caring for the needy, the hungry, the destitute, the uncared-for. The orphan asylum, the home for the aged, the caring for the feeble-minded, are evidences of Christianity that can be seen. Piety toward God and philanthropy toward man must go hand in hand (ver. 17).

19. There is always a tendency to love with the tongue only, it costs less than loving with the heart. James and John are brothers in asserting the need of sincerity in religion and love. Words will not feed the hungry or clothe the naked (ver. 18).

20. A heart that is troubled or doubting cannot be strong. The assurance of salvation and God's favor makes joy and peace, and contributes to strength and efficiency. It is the privilege of the Christian to have a comforting assurance (ver. 19).

21. God is tender in judging his people. "He remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103 : 14). God's people should, therefore, not be unduly severe in judging themselves or others. God condemns hypocrisy; he pities weakness (ver. 20).

22. It requires great wisdom for a man rightly to understand his own heart. There are many opportunities for self-deception, for palliating, and explaining away the sins of the life. The heart may be enlightened by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, so that it may pass a right judgment on itself (ver. 21).

23. An obedient life is a condition of receiving answers to prayer. There are no promises for the disobedient and self-

*Religious teachers tested by their doctrines  
and the fruits of love and faith.*

**4 BELOVED,** <sup>k</sup> believe not every spirit,

*k Jer. 29 : 8 ; Matt. 24 : 4, 5.*

willed. No good thing will the Lord withhold from them that love him (ver. 22).

24. Our first duty is to God, our second duty is toward men. Religion embraces morality, there may be a seeming morality that excludes religion (ver. 23).

25. If a man dwell in God as a refuge he will have an abiding security. No foe on earth or elsewhere can harm him. God is the dwelling-place of his people (ver. 24; Ps. 90 : 1).

#### CHAPTER IV.

The first section of this chapter belongs, in order of thought, to the preceding chapter, in the division extending from 3 : 1-4 : 6. The general subject is that holiness is the result of fellowship with God. John has spoken of the high destiny of the children of God, and the duty of keeping themselves pure; of holiness as the test of discrimination between the children of God and the children of the devil; of love for each other as a mark of holiness; of the confidence that is begotten by a holy life. It remains for him to discuss in this section a fifth topic, that love for the truth is a test and fruit of holiness.

Jesus is himself the truth, all teachers and teachings must conform to his words. Many antichristian teachings are in the world (ver. 1-6); since God is love, the one who does not love is not begotten of God (ver. 7-11); God himself cannot be seen, but his children may be seen and must be loved (ver. 12-16); the realization of God's love will cast out fear and will beget confidence in God (ver. 17-21).

**1-6. A TEST OF HOLINESS WILL BE A LOVE FOR THE TRUTH.** Throughout this Epistle the exhibition of the truth and the condemnation of error alternate with each other. John had said in 3 : 24 that all believers participate in the presence and influences of the Holy Spirit, and that this is the pledge of continued fellowship with

Christ. This must be so, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. But inasmuch as all teachers, both the true and the heretical, claimed to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, how was the true teacher to be distinguished from the false teacher? It is assumed by John that the Holy Spirit is the efficient source of light and of the true teaching; that no one is qualified to teach until thus illumined, and that such teachings as were begotten by the Holy Spirit should be received as authoritative. What was taught, however, must commend itself to the judgment of those enlightened by the teachings of the same Holy Spirit (2 : 27). Every teacher, prophet, apostle, even, must be tested by the true standard of the holy Scriptures (*Acts 17 : 11*). Every teaching must be tested by the law and the testimony (*Isa. 8 : 20*).

**1. John cautions his readers against trusting every kind of spirit, every teacher that appealed to them.** It is not true that every professed believer in God is moved by the Holy Spirit. The attitude of the believer must be to keep the heart open to all the truth, to be desirous of knowing what is the truth, and using all the means at command to discriminate the true from the false. **Believe not every spirit.** Delusions, fanaticism, false teachings, had a large place in the first century. All teachers, true and false alike, claimed to be acting under the control of the Holy Spirit. All pretensions to inspiration are to be fully examined. John urges his readers to exercise a Christian judgment. The Christian and the church must not be credulous. The claims and partial success of Swedenborg (died 1722); of Ann Lee (died 1784); of Joseph Smith (died 1844); of Mrs. Mary G. Eddy, of the spiritualists, and of many kindred errors show that the church must, in the present age, be on its guard against deception. **Try the spirits, rather, prove.** The right of private judgment is here clearly affirmed as against the claim that only the church as repre-

**4 BELOVED, believe not every spirit,**

but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not

*t Isa. 8 : 20; 1 Thess. 5 : 21; Rev. 2 : 2.  
n 5 : 1; 1 Cor. 12 : 3.*

but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone forth into the world. In this ye know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus, is not of God; and this is the spirit of

*m 2 : 18; Acts 20 : 30; 2 Peter 2 : 1.  
o 2 : 22; 2 John 7.*

sented by its officers, can rightly interpret the Scriptures. There is a spiritual indwelling in even the humblest believer, whose opinion must have weight in giving the verdict of the church at large. The general agreement of holy believers the world over as to the mind of Christ and the truthfulness of a doctrine must have great weight. The point to be discovered is whether these teachings are of God, that is, in accord with the truth of God as manifest in his nature and revealed in his word. God speaks through those who were the admitted apostles of Christ (see Paul's claim in Gal. 1 : 8, 9), through those who were entrusted with the divine teachings, through the general result of the teachings thus revealed, through a present Holy Spirit at work on the hearts of holy men. The term, **prophets**, does not mean the man foretelling the future event, but the teacher who is a witness for the Spirit of truth. That many false teachers had arisen is alluded to in 2 : 19. **Gone out.** This does not mean, gone forth from the church into the world, as in 2 : 19, but from the world into the church. It required wisdom in the first age when Christianity was in process of establishment on its intellectual and moral sides, to ascertain the truth and to hold it firmly. It requires wisdom in all ages when there is much of intellectual and spiritual unrest. Because an interpretation is new is not a proof that it is untrue. The doctrine of justification by faith, brought into new prominence by Luther, was an old Bible teaching, forgotten and obscured by a false church. The despised Anabaptists of Germany and Switzerland were almost fought out of existence for presenting the New Testament conception of the church as a spiritual body. In their case the truth lay with a very small minority.

**2.** This verse furnishes the criterion by which the teachings are to be tested. **Spirit of God.** This reference is to the Holy Spirit, through whom God is truly revealed, who works upon and through the human spirit. It is assumed by John that every one influenced by the Holy Spirit will make an outward confession in accord with the mind of the Spirit. **That confesseth.** It would not follow that every one making this correct confession concerning Christ would, of necessity, be a Christian. It would follow that his teachings would be in accord with the truth, and that he would not be a teacher of error. The substance of the confession is that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.** John does not declare the error to be the denial that Jesus is the Messiah, as some maintain, but that he had a true human nature. In 2 John, ver. 7, John speaks of Jesus coming in the flesh, apart from all consideration as to time. In 5 : 20 he alludes to the historical event when Jesus came. The expression used by John here implies that Jesus came in the flesh, and even yet retains that human nature. **Of God.** This teaching, the verity of Christ's human nature, is a divine teaching. The apostles witnessed to it, the enlightened reason sees a necessity for it, the Holy Spirit in the heart of the true teacher is constantly adding his influence to the truth of the doctrine.

**3.** This verse presents the opposite side, the spirit which is not of God. The Revised version presents here a reading different from that of the Common version. **And every spirit... of God,** rather, *And every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God.* The grammatical form implies not merely the non-confession, but the refusal to make the confession. The man who does not hold to Jesus cannot be regarded as a Christian or a Christian

of God. And this is that spirit of anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

**4** Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and

the antichrist, of which ye have heard that it is coming; and now, it is in the world already.

**4** Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he who is in you, than he who is in the world. They are of the world: for this cause they speak of the world,

p 2 : 18; 2 Thess. 2 : 7.

q 3 : 9, 10.

r 2 : 13; 5 : 4, 5.

s John 12 : 31.

teacher. **And this is . . . should come**, rather, *And this is that spirit of the antichrist whereof ye have heard that it cometh*. The *ye have heard* does not refer to what John has written in this letter, but to the general course of instruction in the Christian faith which they had received. At the time when John wrote, as in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2 : 7), the spirit of antichrist was already at work. John would open their eyes to see the dangerous character of the teachings that were presented to them. While avowedly in the line of the Holy Spirit's teaching, they were essentially antichristian. It is implied here, as in 2 : 18, that there would be, in time, the manifestation of a distinct, personal antichrist of whom these false teachers were forerunners.

**4.** John writes in an assured tone concerning his readers. **Ye** shows the contrast between his Christian readers and the antichristian teachers. He implies that all in the church are all that they professed to be, redeemed, and anointed by the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact some unworthy members were in the churches that were under John's oversight. (See 3 John 9.) **Little children**, rather, *my little children*. **Have overcome**. He does not say that they will overcome, but that they have overcome **them**; that is, the false teachers. As they are the children of God, and are led and guarded by him, they have thereby in fact already overcome them who are animated by the opposite spirit. John is moving here in a high and ideal region, assuming that all God's people will assuredly be kept free from the entanglements of Satan. It is that victory of the divine over the undivine which is inherent in the relation which they sustain to God, to Jesus their mediator, to the Holy Spirit their ever present indwelling teacher.

It is not true that all believers are kept entirely free from all errors, for the New Testament shows how easily the members were led aside by false teachings. We have but to read the letters to the Galatians, the Thessalonians, the Corinthians, to see how often false notions led them captive. John is writing as always, not concerning all teachings, but the fundamental one concerning the person of Christ; and not concerning all members, but of the true members; and not of all true members for all time, but in a general way, in an ideal sense, it remains true that they who are of the truth will hold the truth. **Because** assigns the reason for overcoming. God is greater than Satan, than the antichrist, than the delusions which spring from the world. God is in the life of the Christian (3 : 24). The Holy Spirit dwells in the spiritually minded man (3 : 24). By reason of God's indwelling and watchcare, by reason of Jesus' victory over the prince of this world (John 16 : 11, ss), by reason of the constant light given by the Holy Spirit, there must be victory of truth over error. By **world** is meant the prince of this world, who has large power here, from whom the false teachers come and whose cause they represent.

**5.** This verse gives the origin of the false teachings and teachers. They do not spring from above, from God, and are not divine in their nature. **Of the world**. This term is not used of the earth in its physical aspect, but stands for the unrenewed, unregenerate nature, living in the darkness, under the control of Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor. 4 : 4). **Speak they of the world**, rather, *speak they as of the world*. He does not mean that they speak concerning the world, but they speak as those who have sprung from the world. These teachers are not in-

6 <sup>t</sup>the world heareth them. We are of God: <sup>u</sup>he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we <sup>x</sup>the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

6 and the world hears them. We are of God; he that knows God, hears us; he that is not of God, hears us not. From this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

<sup>t</sup> John 15:19; 17:14.

<sup>u</sup> John 8:47; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 10:7.

<sup>x</sup> Isa. 8:20; John 14:17.

fluenced by the desire to please God, the contents of their teachings have not come down from heaven. For the source of Christ's teachings see John 8:26; 14:24. For the source of the apostolic teachings see 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 1:12. These teachers have an audience, **the world heareth them**. The unregenerate do not love the truth, especially when it exalts Christ and humbles human nature. Those who belong to the world have no susceptibility for the divine, and cannot receive what is made known by those anointed by the Holy Spirit. This inner prevailing temper will manifest itself in the attitude toward Christ and his truth. Paul draws a line of distinction between the world and Christ's kingdom. James condemns a love for the world as inconsistent with a friendship for God (James 4:4). There is a spiritual kingdom in the world, but not of it. God and **world** mark the extremes, in John's mind, of truth and error.

6. As opposed to the false teachers stand the teachers of the truth, receiving their message from on high. **Knoweth God.** To know God is, in the Scripture use of the term, vastly more than to know of God. Spiritual fellowship with God leads to a recognition of the true teacher who stands for the truth of God. There are some things hidden from the mere intellectual powers which are open to the spiritual mind (1 Cor. 2:14). The man who is not of God will not be in love with the truth which is of God. There is a moral opposition between the two. It is not strange that the truth and the true teacher will meet with dislike and opposition. Jesus had a comparatively unsuccessful ministry judged by numerical results (John 1:11). Paul speaks of the unpalatable nature of true teaching to the unregenerate mind (2 Tim. 4:8). **Hereby**, rather, *By this*. The reference is to what is contained in ver. 5, 6, the reception of the false teachings by the world, the reception of the

true teachings by those knowing God, and their rejection by those not of God. Jesus gives the same test in John 10:8, and in his answer to Pilate (John 18:37). In physical nature there is a mutually attractive power; in like manner in the sphere of truth there is a kinship between the truth-loving man and the truth as it is in Jesus. The **we** embraces both John and his readers. In ver. 2, 3 John had spoken of the attitude of the teachers toward the person of Christ as the test of the true and the false teaching, inasmuch as it was false teaching on this point to which they were most exposed. This anti-christian teaching, here considered, was on the part of the teachers alone. In ver. 5, 6 John speaks of the spirit of truth and error to be distinguished from each other by the attitude toward true teaching, the reference being to the hearers. There is required a spiritual anointing of the mind and the tongue that there may be a right teaching concerning Christ; there is required a like anointing of the mind and the ear that there may be a love for the right teaching. Heretical teaching will beget false views, heretical hearers will create a demand for false teachers. Christ is himself the truth. Both teachers and hearers must be judged by their attitude toward Christ, his person, his authority, his works and words. In setting Christ right before them John will settle the entire contents of their theology.

PART THREE. This chapter marks an advance in the thought contained in this letter. God is light, has all perfections, is without the limitations that belong to men. But a person might be conceived of as full of holiness and yet not moved by love. The atmosphere of this letter is that of love. In preceding portions John has enforced the duty of brotherly love (2:7-11; 3:14-18). The peculiar teaching of this section, love for others, springs directly out of kinship with God's nature itself

7 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for <sup>b</sup>God is love.

9 "In this was manifested the love of

y 3 : 10, 11, 23.

z Deut. 30 : 6; 1 Thess. 4 : 9.

a 3 : 14.

b Ver. 16; Exod. 34 : 6, 7.

c 3 : 16; John 3 : 16, 17; Rom. 8 : 32.

as one of love. No higher motive for the daily conduct of life can be given than that here announced.

#### 7-11. LOVE IS THE TEST OF BEING BEGOTTEN OF GOD.

7. This is not a command to love, but an appeal. **Beloved . . . another.** The love spoken of is not simply an emotion, but a love that fulfills the law (Rom. 13 : 8). John joins himself with them. He assigns the highest reason, for love is of God; that is, springs out of, comes from God as its source. The natural man makes self the center and end of life. Love impels a man to go outside of and beyond himself. All true love has its origin in God. Such love shows that we have his spirit, and are moved by divine impulses. Hatred, malice, envy, wrath, and all ugly moral impulses have their origin in a sinful and perverted nature. They do not originate in God either directly or indirectly. God, with all his nature, is against them. John joins love, sonship, and knowledge of God together as synonymous terms. The man who loves is *born of God*, rather, *begotten* and *knoweth God*. John is speaking, not of all affection among men, but of the affection of Christians for each other. An unregenerate man may display much of a benevolent character. Even this we may recognize as an outgrowth of the divine life introduced by Christ, and as coming from the general influence of society that has been unconsciously impressed by the spirit of Christ. We may, in many cases, see the blessed influence of God shining through the darkness of sin, even when men have not submitted themselves to his gracious regenerating influences. John is speaking here, not of such emotions breaking forth singly in opposition to prevailing selfishness, but of that life in which love is the ruling principle. When Christian love is sovereign in the life there is evidence that the man is begotten of God.

7 Beloved, let us love one another; because love is of God, and every one that loves has been begotten of God, 8 and knows God. He that loves not has not known God; because God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God

8. This verse is in contrast with the preceding, giving the negative side. **Loveth not.** No object is given; John is speaking of love in a general way, love as a controlling motive. Such a man has no true acquaintance with God, no just conceptions of him, no right attitude toward him. The reason is assigned. **God is love.** In his relation to all beings God is love. Only a personal spirit can love; therefore, God is a personal existence. He is a being to whom it is a necessity of his existence to manifest himself, and to impart to others the blessedness enjoyed by himself. God poured out his love, before the creation, on the eternal Son (John 17 : 24), he now pours it out on all those who are Christ's. This love moves God in all that he does. It is not said that God is knowledge, or power, though he is omniscient and almighty. This is a definition of God's essential being on its moral side. He cannot cease to love without ceasing to be God. God would not have put in our nature as an essential attribute what did not first exist in himself. Inasmuch as God has made us with the capacity, the power to love, has created a delight in the exercise and reception of love, these must exist in their fulness in God himself. Paul's thorn in the flesh came from love, though it brought suffering (2 Cor. 12 : 7). David's afflictions were the products of God's wise love (Ps. 119 : 67). God desires the good of all his creatures. To the love of such a God every man may fittingly entrust himself, both here and hereafter.

9. Now follows the supreme act of God's love. **In this**, rather, *Herein*. John fixes his thought upon the summation of God's love in sending a Saviour to a guilty world, having no claim upon God. This is not our love to God, but his love to us—spontaneous, undeserved, gracious, bringing untold blessings, bestowed upon the neglectful

God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, <sup>a</sup>that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son <sup>b</sup>to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, <sup>c</sup>if God so loved us, we ought

in our case, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we 10 may live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also

d 5:11.      e Deut. 7:7,8; John 15:16; Rom. 5:8-10.      f 2:2.

g Matt. 18:33; John 15:12,13; Eph. 4:31,32.

and disobedient. **Toward us**, rather, *in us*, or, *in our case*. This love has reference to us. **Sent**, rather, *hath sent*. The sending took place at one definite time, referring to the incarnation and the entire mediatorial life upon the earth, but the effects are regarded as abiding in their character. It is implied here that Jesus had a pre-existent life, so that he did not begin to be when he was born into a human life; that he bore a relation to God as **Son**, so that while others may be adopted as children he was always in a filial relation to God; that his relation to God was unique, so that he is called an **only begotten Son**. This verse is a reminiscence of John 3:16,17. The term *only begotten* occurs here only in this letter. For instances of its use see Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; John 10:14,18; 3:16,18; Heb. 11:17. The term *only begotten* indicates both the divine character of the person sent and the greatness of the love that impelled the sending. The greatness of God's love, the greatness of the person of Jesus, the greatness of man's worth that required such a sacrifice, all stand out here. This love was personal, eternal, atoning, entailing a sacrifice on God's part. The wideness of God's love appears in the term, **world**. The purpose of the coming is found in **that we might live through him**. The life is eternal life—fellowship with God's own life, blessed participation in the fulness of his nature, a life that is life indeed (1 Tim. 6:19, R. V.). In John 3:16 the blessings of Jesus' death are limited to believers. Here the blessings are not compulsory—moral blessings never are—but all may share in them. It is a world-wide provision. It is an atonement that is sufficient for all; it becomes efficient to all who accept its provisions.

**10.** This verse reveals God's love as mediatorial. The peculiar nature of

God's love is that it is a seeking love, not waiting to be sought for or deserved. The Christian religion, alone in the world, presents a God who goes out after men in their sins, desiring their welfare and holiness, providing for them a complete salvation, and urging their acceptance. We may not conceive of God as hating men until his wrath was averted by the offering of Jesus. Rather, back of Jesus and his cross, was God's love moving him to effect a reconciliation. On **propitiation** see 2:2. The eternal love of God is the ground, not the result, of the reconciliation. It were well if the term reconciliation were always used instead of the term atonement. By the one act, God effected a reconciliation, so that now nothing stands in the way of the salvation of all but their unreconciled hearts. It is through the death of Christ the reconciliation took place (Eph. 1:7).

**11.** John now comes down from the height of God's love and sacrifice to the effect on the Christian life. **Beloved.** He uses this term no less than five times in this short letter. If one so high above us in position, in power, in character, loved us in our guilt and imperfection, we ought to love those on the same level with ourselves. Only in this way can we show our love to God and our possession of his spirit. True love cannot be hid in the heart, it must go out toward others. We may reciprocate God's love to us by giving our love to others. At the final judgment as portrayed in Matt. 25:31-46, Jesus gives as the deciding test the works of help done to others in his name. Not theory or orthodoxy, but the helpful Christian life on the earth reveals the saved life. The great motive for human benevolence is God's benevolence.

**12-16. LOVE TO OTHERS GIVES THE ASSURANCE OF SONSHIP.** John

**12** also to love one another. **b** No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and this love is perfected in us.

**13** **k** Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And **l** we have seen and do testify that **m** the Father

**12** ought to love one another. No one has ever beheld God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and the love of him is perfected in us. In this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his **14** Spirit. And we have beheld, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son,

**n** Ver. 20; John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16.

**l** 1:1-3.

**i** Ver. 18; 2:5.

**m** Ver. 10; John 3:11.

**k** 3:24; John 14:20.

has just spoken of love as the test of sonship. To be begotten of God is the same as to love one another. God dwells above, the absolutely holy and perfect God, pouring out his love continually like the sun. How may we know that we are his, when there comes no outward sign? The apostles who lived in a personal fellowship with Jesus might be assured of acceptance, but when Jesus is absent how may assurance come to the heart? John answers this question.

**12.** This verse explains the statement in the latter part of ver. 11. **No man . . . any time.** The same expression occurs in John 1:18. God remains a God unseen by the human eye, pure spirit (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16). Men had seen manifestations of Jehovah, flashes of his glory, but him they had not seen. God cannot be known through the sight or bodily seuses, but he may be known. There is one method by which we may be assured that we have a true knowledge of him, the evidence that we love one another. The church can know God and be united to him only by a spiritual bond, the bond of love. If love rule in the heart, there is in this the assurance that God is an indwelling God. **If we . . . in us.** John is here speaking of the Christian brotherhood. A man may not say, I have seen God in open vision, or I comprehend God in all his perfections, but he may say, I am assured that God lives in me, for he works in me (see John 14:23, 24). Pantheism makes God and the man one, denying a personal consciousness to God, thereby obliterating a personal God. Mysticism makes the believer conscious of the presence of God as distinct from his own thoughts. He separates in his own mind between the consciousness of God and his own consciousness. John does not fall into

either of these errors. He reasons from a manifested love for others, a love that is not in harmony with a selfish and unregenerate heart, that God's love is present. **His love.** The reference is to our love to God, not to his love for us. **Perfected.** He does not mean that there is perfect love for the brother, but that love to God comes to completeness, acquires strength and maturity by the exercise of love to others. While God is unseen, men are always with us. We have many opportunities for doing good, for cultivating unselfishness, for resisting temptations. Love for God attains to its required stature by the exercise of love for the man next to us. **Is perfected.** A man who has a growing love for men will, at the same time, and as a result, have a growing love for God. A man grows heavenward by living the right life earthward.

**13.** What proof have we that God dwells in us? **In this** refers to the fact stated, **that we have his Spirit.** That God dwells in a man is the same as to say that the Spirit dwells in the heart, imparting God's nature of love. The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 8:16).

**14.** In the group of verses extending to the sixteenth we have emphasis laid on the thought of the mutual indwelling of God and the believer. **We** embraces the apostolic group to whom was entrusted, in an especial manner, the duty of witnessing of and for Christ (John 15:27; Acts 1:8). **Have seen and testify,** rather, **have beheld,** implying a continued looking at, and **bear witness.** We have here the main facts of the gospel history, the Father's love, the sending of the Son, the divine nature of the Son as manifest from the peculiar relation to the Father, the purpose of the coming of the Son that he might be a Saviour, the implied

sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. <sup>a</sup> Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, <sup>b</sup> God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

**16** <sup>c</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. <sup>d</sup> God is love; and <sup>e</sup> he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. **17** Herein is our love made perfect, that <sup>f</sup> we may have boldness in the day of judgment: <sup>g</sup> because as he is, so are we

15 as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known, and have believed, the love that God has in our case. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

**17** In this has love been perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because even as he is, so we also are in this world.

*n* 5:1; Rom. 10:9.

*o* 3:24.

*p* 3:1, 16.

*q* Ver. 8.

*r* Ver. 12; 3:24.

*s* 2:28; 3:19-21.

*t* 3:3.

guilt and condemnation of the race whereby it needed a salvation, the death of Jesus through which redemption issues, the wideness of his work, as shown in the term, **world**. Both here and in 2:2 he shows the wideness of the mission of Christ. The New Testament rests on a historical foundation, on facts well known, capable of proof from witnesses who were personally cognizant of them. John bears witness that God had really, in this manner, manifested his love toward the race of men. **Sent**, rather, *hath sent*. The act of sending was completed at one definite time, the results abide perpetually. Through time and eternity Jesus remains the Saviour of his people.

**15.** Faith in Christ must approve itself by an open confession of the Son of God without fear or shame in opposition to the world which ignores or hates his followers. Faith rests on knowledge, on facts which may be known; knowledge and love are joined together. **Dwelleth**, rather, *abideth*.

**16.** John declares that he and they have received this knowledge. **Have known and believed**, rather, *know and have believed*. **To us**, rather, *in us*, or, *in our case*. The great redemptive love of God is here meant. This love had illumined their knowledge and warmed their hearts. There is a tendency in John to turn a thought over and over again, hence he again says, **God is love**. John has here three abidings: abiding in love, abiding in God, abiding in the believer. Abiding in love is regarded as the condition of abiding in fellowship with God. The term, *love*, is here used in its widest sense. It takes two forms, love to God, love to men. In this

statement he sums up all that he has been saying in this entire section.

**17-21.** THE REALIZATION OF GOD'S LOVE DISPELS FEAR. The apostle now deals with the habitual temper of mind which exists when the abiding love of God has come to its maturity. What John here says is true only of the higher grades of the Christian life. These words are parallel in meaning with 3:19-21. They set forth the repose and confidence with which a mature love will endow the believer in the day of judgment.

**17. Herein.** That is, the statement in this verse that we may have confidence when standing before the final and holy tribunal. **Our love made perfect**, rather, *love made perfect with us*. *Love* is used here in its largest sense, going out in all directions; not love to God alone, not love to man alone, but love itself is meant. The result of the perfected life is that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Luther renders the term **boldness** by joyfulness. Sin and guilt bring alarm, so that Adam hid himself from God (Gen. 3:8). Peter felt himself unworthy to be in the presence of Christ (Luke 5:8). Isaiah was conscious of a woe upon him when he saw God's holiness (Isa. 6:5). Judas, moved by remorse, fled to suicide. At the coming of the judge men cry out for fear of the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16). The judgment day has nothing but terror for the ungodly, a fearful looking for of judgment (Heb. 10:27). But union with Christ brings confidence, serenity of mind, joyfulness (see Rom. 8:33). Jesus the judge is also Jesus the Saviour and friend. **For . . . world**.

The he refers, not to God, but to Jesus. In 2:28 John speaks of the confidence

18 in this world. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. <sup>x</sup>We love him, because he first loved us.

20 <sup>y</sup>If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God? <sup>z</sup>whom he hath not seen? And <sup>a</sup>this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment; and he that fears is not perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us. If any one say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God love his brother also.

<sup>u</sup> Rom. 8 : 15; 1 Tim. 1 : 7.

<sup>x</sup> Ver. 10; Luke 7 : 47.

<sup>y</sup> 2 : 4; 3 : 17.

<sup>z</sup> Ver. 12.

<sup>a</sup> 3 : 11, 23; Matt. 22 : 37, 39; John 13 : 34; 15 : 12; Rom. 13 : 10.

that believers will have at the appearing of Jesus. The judgment, spoken of here, is under the authority of Jesus (*see John 5 : 22*). In 2 : 21, 22 the children of God have confidence because they kept the commandments. Here there is no fear because the life in the world is like that of Jesus. It is founded on a righteousness like his (2 : 29), it is moved by God's love, it is the life of a child of God, controlled by his Spirit (3 : 24). The Christian has the same kind of peace, holiness, repose of mind, righteousness, that Jesus had, though vastly smaller in degree.

18. This verse gives the negative side of the believer's position; it is not one of fear. Love does not beget fear, but it drives it away. When there is dread of the future, of death, it is because God's gracious love has not yet been realized in a full measure. Perfect love drives away disturbances, doubts, fears. Both here and hereafter the trusting heart may repose on God's love, wisdom, goodness, guidance, and gracious care.

19. This verse looks back to the preceding, and gives reason to think that our love may become supreme in us. We love him because he first loved us. Omit *him*. The term *love* is used in the broadest, most absolute sense. In so far as our nature is responsive to God there is begotten in us a nature and a love like his own. The love will be of the same kind as his, moving in the same direction and having the same power; a love for enemies, for service, for sacrifice, for all good causes.

20. Love to God and hatred of the brother are mutually contradictory.

John reasons as follows: If a man does not love God's image as revealed in his fellow-disciples, an image that is seen day by day, an image that appeals to the sight, he cannot love the One in whose likeness these brethren are formed. If a God visible in his disciples is not loved, but hated rather, a God utterly invisible will not be loved. It is probable that John was moved to make these utterances because he noted the beginnings of unloveliness on the part of some of the early disciples. He shows what the natural tendency of the want of love leads to, a separation from the life of God. It is assumed that the brother spoken of is one begotten of God, a fellow-disciple.

21. This verse adds the emphasis of a divine command for love to the brother. In 3 : 23 we had a commandment speaking of the duty toward Jesus Christ and the brother. The command here mentioned is found in Matt. 22 : 37-39. The *him* refers to God, not to Jesus. The new commandment attributed to Jesus embraced simply the duty of love for one another (*John 13 : 34*). The Ten Commandments revolve about the two centers, love to God, love to man. A right relation to these two sums up the entire duty of men. It is admitted by all that a person should love God and serve him. Even when men are orthodox in their views concerning God, they may forget justice and kindness toward their fellow-men. John Newton prayed to God and enslaved his fellow-men. A person who loves God must cultivate and exhibit toward his brothers sense of duty, of consideration, of kindness, of justice. Benevolence and humanity do not constitute piety, but they are fitting and

necessary channels by which piety manifests itself. Piety and helpfulness and brotherly love should grow side by side. In his attitude toward men the entire life of Jesus is summed up in the words, "He went about doing good" (*Acts 10:38*).

**NOTE 1. THE PERSON OF JESUS THE TEST OF ORTHODOXY,** 4:6. Wrong views as to the person of Christ will materially affect the entire conceptions of Christianity. Almost all heresies have, at bottom, wrong conceptions of the person of Christ. The one point of contention on John's part is to win his readers to a right conception of what Jesus is. If a man, a teacher, is right in regard to Christ, this man is regarded as the orthodox man and teacher. But the denial of the reality of Jesus, of his complete person as human and divine, this to him is the essence of wrong thinking, the spirit of error, the spirit of antichrist. In our day, as in John's day, nothing is more essential than the question asked by Jesus himself: "What think ye of Christ?" (*Matt. 22:41*.) For a complete discussion of the person of Christ consult Dorner, "The Doctrine of the Person of Christ."

**NOTE 2. THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH,** 4:21. There is in John's writings a noticeable assertion of certainty as to salvation and an assurance that characterizes the faith of the believer. John declares that we are of God (ver. 6). In ver. 13 he declares we know that we dwell in God. In ver. 18 there is the assertion of a supreme confidence as to the decisions of the great day. John dwells personally in the land of assurance, and writes to all his fellow-disciples as also dwelling in that gracious land. We must not, however, confound faith with assurance. The ground of faith is the external word of promise. The ground of assurance is the inward witness of the Spirit that we fulfil the conditions of the promise (*Rom. 4:20, 21; 8:16; Eph. 1:13; 1 John 4:13; 5:10*). This witness of the Spirit is not a new revelation from God, but a strengthening of faith so that it becomes conscious, and has in it no element of doubt. There may be a faith which saves, but which has

no assurance, no peace or joy. Those who are already saved are urged by the New Testament writers to go on unto assurance (*Heb. 6:11; 2 Peter 1:10*). One person may know, as did Wesley, the hour and minute when there came a new light into the soul with an accompanying assurance; another may have love to God, but may not locate even the year when the heart found rest in God. But we are not saved by peace, joy, or assurance, we are saved by faith only in Jesus Christ. There may be a little faith that permits a man to sink, for a time; there may be a large faith that does not know the meaning of fear. The physical infirmities of life or imperfect conceptions of the fulness of God's forgiveness may cause the life to be lived in doubt and fear. The approach of death may bring alarm; the thought of the judgment may cause apprehension. The possession of peace, joy, assurance is not of the essence of salvation; they belong to the privileges of the Christian life.

**NOTE 3. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD,** 4:24. John dwells much on fellowship with God. In 1:3 he speaks of this fellowship, using the term, *koinonia*, which means having things in common. The word is employed in Acts 2:42 to show that they had all things in common. In this chapter he uses the expression dwelling, abiding. He speaks of it again and again (ver. 10-12, 15). The terms abiding in God, and God abiding in us, are both used, so that one is not found apart from the other. God may be said to abide in us by his personal watchcare and love. Above all, the expression signifies that the Holy Spirit abiding in us, is in reality, God abiding in us. John does not stop to discuss the personality of the Holy Spirit. There is a participation in what God has and does in his moral nature, so that his peace, joy, holiness, happiness, his mind as to life and conduct will be shared by his disciples. God and the believing soul will, in a true sense, be one. A person may be conscious of God's indwelling presence because a review of the heart shows that the conduct and life are in accord with God's will. Peter speaks of sharing in the divine nature (*2 Peter 1:4*). Rationalism is more to be feared

than mysticism; the ignoring of the Spirit's presence and power is a source of more danger than the magnifying of his presence and power. There is an illumination of the heart and mind of the believer by the Holy Spirit; there will be an open-mindedness for seeing new forms of the truth, there will be new conceptions of the old teachings under the guidance of the heavenly teacher whereby the willing disciple will be led into larger truths (*John 16:13*). If the heart be opened for the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit there will come a wonderful increase in spiritual knowledge, in spiritual activity, in personal holiness, in the discovery of teachings hidden from others.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The Christian must be an intelligent Christian, inasmuch as he is called upon to test all religious teachings presented to him (ver. 1).

2. All ages have false teachers. The truth even in a false system must not be condemned, but falsity must always be condemned. False teaching may, in the end, bring false living (ver. 1; *1 Cor. 11:19*).

3. God is always on the side of Jesus Christ. Thinking right about Christ should lead to living right in the presence of Christ. Christ loved must be a Christ confessed (ver. 2).

4. It ought not to be a matter of surprise that errors should arise, inasmuch as Jesus, Peter, and Paul announce their coming (ver. 3).

5. No humble, spiritually minded Christian stands alone. He has with him, in him, for him, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. The Bible, prayer, thoughtfulness, and fellowship with Christian minds will be of great help in discovering the truth (ver. 4).

6. There are but two grades of men, two animating principles among men. The true teacher will aim to exalt Christ, to beget a sense of sin, to lead men to Christ and a Christly life. The false teacher will avoid Christ and the cross (ver. 5).

7. Like seeks like. Each one after death will go to his own place (ver. 6).

8. Love is costly. It demands patience,

requires sacrifice, takes time. God's love cost him the gift of the only begotten Son. Jesus' love made for him the cross. All true love on our part will cost much more than words or mere emotions (ver. 7).

9. That which God loved in us was not our sins, but our souls, which we had marred, which he desired to repair (ver. 8).

10. We cannot adequately estimate the real heinousness of sin without considering the sacrifice which it costs to redeem us from its power and guilt (ver. 9).

11. God's love in nature is insignificant when measured by his love as seen in redemption. The reconciliation would not be known to us apart from revelation. The cross is the highest manifestation of God's love, power, and holiness. It shows God's heart, our danger, our worth (ver. 10).

12. The unpurchased love of God in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ is the great argument for Christian benevolence. God's love should create and maintain man's love for others. God's benevolence means more to us than his almighty. All God's powers are under the control of his love (ver. 10).

13. God's love cannot be adequately described, it is a *so* loved. He called Abraham, "My friend." We cannot earn God's love, but we may so live as to share in it richly (ver. 11).

14. No one may see God with the physical eyes, but Moses saw the God who cannot be seen. It is only by such a vision of God that the life may be purified and strengthened. We may see God's image, in a sadly blurred way, in men around us (ver. 12).

15. The Spirit, sent by God, will work in men the mind of God. The Holy Spirit works from within, making not a mechanical imitation, but building up an inner life of godliness. He gives a participation in the divine life (ver. 13).

16. A universal salvation is possible if there is a universal acceptance of Christ. Jesus came, not to destroy, but to save (*John 3:17*). It is against the plain teachings of Jesus to declare that all will be saved (ver. 14).

17. The heart, the lips, the conduct,

**5** Whosoever <sup>b</sup> believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: <sup>c</sup> and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

*b* 4:2, 15; Matt. 16:16; John 1:12, 13; Rom. 10:9, 10.

**5** EVERY one who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God; and every one that loves him who begot, loves also him who has been be-

*c* 4:20; John 15:23.

must all confess Christ. If the heart confess Christ, but the lips remain silent, it is but half a life. If the lips confess Christ, but the heart be unloving, it is simply a word religion. If the heart and lips confess Christ, but the life be unworthy, the inconsistent life will be a stumbling-block to others (ver. 15).

18. That God should send an only begotten Son to a world like ours, only an atom in the physical universe, is almost incomprehensible. It reveals God's boundless love and our boundless worth (ver. 16).

19. The certainty of a judgment should awaken the careless and ungodly. That it is delayed reveals God's patience that the judgment may not overwhelm us. God's patience should not benumb the heart into forgetfulness (ver. 17).

20. God's love awakens and sustains love. Before the foundations of the world were laid, God had provided a Lamb slain (Rev. 13:8). It is a mark of deep guilt when God's love does not beget a responding love (ver. 19).

21. If God loves my brother, then I ought to love him. Jesus identifies himself with his disciples (Acts 9:5). To hurt a disciple hurts Jesus, to help a disciple helps and pleases Jesus. Hatred of a brother and love for God cannot exist in the same heart (ver. 20).

## CHAPTER V.

PART FOUR. THE RELATION OF FAITH TO LOVE, TO ASSURANCE, AND AN OVERCOMING LIFE. John presents a new thought that love springs from a Christ rightly understood on the side of the mind and heart (ver. 1-3); there will of necessity be conflicts in the inner and outer Christian life, but faith will lead to victory (ver. 4, 5); there is a three-fold testimony to the Sonship of Jesus (ver. 6-13); love for Christ and confidence in him will lead to intercessory prayer (ver. 14-17); he closes with mentioning the certainties of the Christian life, the fellowship of the believer with

God, and an appeal for a godly life (ver. 18-21).

The necessary connection between love to God and brotherly love is deduced from a common sonship of God. John understands by faith, not a mere assent to an intellectual proposition, not a creed faith, but embracing these, and having also a spiritual fellowship with Christ. John in this letter rarely mentions faith; he looks at the relation of the believing soul to Jesus as one of love. In this last section he notices the relation of faith to love and to the overcoming life. The love of the heart is the love of a believer. The keyword of this section is found in 5:5. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." In the preceding sections he had shown that God is light, that God is holy, that God is love. In showing now that love is grounded in faith in the Son of God he gives completeness to his discussion, and brings his Epistle into harmony with the other writings of the New Testament.

**I. 1-3. A BELIEF IN THE MESSIAHSHIP OF JESUS LEADS TO A LIFE OF LOVE.** John here shows that a belief in Jesus as Christ constitutes the essence of the regenerate life. From this faith there must be, of necessity, a love upward toward God, and a love toward the brother standing in the same relation to God.

**I. Whosoever... Christ.** Faith in Jesus as the Christ has here the meaning which John always gives it as that divinely wrought trust in the work and in the person of Christ produced by the Spirit. **Born of God**, rather, *begotten of God*. The fatherhood of the regenerate life is in God. God implants brotherly love in the heart in the act of begetting the spiritual life. When the lineaments of God's nature are recognized in any one, these features must be loved. To hate a fellow-believer, a godly man, would be the same as to hate God himself. What is here said is conceived to be true of all Christians, *whosoever*.

**2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.  
**3** <sup>a</sup>For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not grievous: for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

2 gotten of him. In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and do his commandments.  
**3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome: 4 because all that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the

*d* John 14 : 15, 21-24; 15 : 10; 2 John 6.    *e* Ps. 119 : 47, 103; Micah 6 : 8; Matt. 11 : 28-30; Rom. 7 : 12, 22.    *f* 2 : 13-17; 3 : 9; 4 : 4; John 16 : 33.

The spirit of Christ in the mind will beget a family feeling, in the presence of which artificial social distinctions will be forgotten. It is the tendency of selfishness and worldliness to create and maintain fixed dividing lines in the social structure and in the church; it is the tendency of Christ to level men upward, and to create a spiritual brotherhood.

**2.** John's writings have in them the spirit of Hebrew poetry, giving the same thought in two forms, but with this peculiarity that in the second statement is always an added thought. In 4 : 20 it was stated that our love for the brethren is a condition of love to God. Here the converse is stated, that our love to God, is the measure of our love to the children of God. Where one is found the other is also found. **Love God.** Of this every believer may be assured by direct knowledge. Every heart may be conscious of a right attitude toward God. Every Peter may say, "Thou knowest that I love thee." Love for God may be evident from the desire to obey his commands, to meditate on his precepts, to be fashioned into his likeness. This love to God will prompt to **keep**, rather, **do**, his commandments. Obedience is always and everywhere the test of love. From this love to God it follows by this, rather, *hereby*, that **we love the children of God.** He who loves a Christian because he is a Christian, has the evidence that he himself is a Christian.

**3.** **For** explains the two preceding clauses and their relation to each other. It is also a command of God that we love the brethren. **Love of God** here means our love to God. **Not grievous.** The same word is used by Jesus in Matt. 11 : 30, there rendered "burden." The commands of Jesus are

not irrational, absurd, oppressive in their nature. Jesus is a reasonable Christ, knowing our natures and the power of our temptations.

**II. 4, 5. FAITH IN JESUS LEADS TO AN OVERCOMING LIFE.** John having spoken of the assured conquest for the Christian life, whereby God's commandments are to be, not grievous, but pleasant, now gives the secret of this success—faith in Jesus Christ.

**4. For** shows the reason for the statement in the preceding verse that the commandments are not grievous. **Whatsoever** is a collective term in the neuter gender, signifying all who are begotten of God. That it stands for the *we* of the preceding verse is evident from the use of **our** in the closing part of this verse. Only persons can be begotten of God. **Overcometh.** There is a conflict involving the passions and weaknesses of our own nature, the opposition of an evil world (John 17 : 14), a god of this world (2 Cor. 4 : 4), of perverted principles of life and action. John writes in no doubtful spirit, but in terms of confidence as to the result. **World** is used in a bad sense as under the control of wicked forces (see 2 Cor. 4 : 4; John 17 : 14; James 4 : 4; 1 John 5 : 19). The test of the Christian life is that it overcomes. John makes no provision for worldliness in the church, or for worldly minded Christians. The means of overcoming is faith in the Son of God. He writes in a very forcible way, not saying that faith is the means by which victory is secured, but faith is the victory. **Overcometh**, rather, *hath overcome*. The result is so assured, so united with the permanent victory won by Christ (John 16 : 33), that it is spoken of as already past. The Christian life is looked upon, for the moment, not as a struggle, but as a

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

5 world, even our faith. And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

*g 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:57.*

victory. The stress is laid here, not upon love, but upon faith by which the power and victory of Christ are conceived of as united with each believer. He thinks of all believers as conquering, and makes no provision for little faith or for a failing faith, only for a conquering faith. The four prominent terms are the world with its pronounced antagonism, God with his overcoming strength, faith which unites the soul with God, victory as the natural and consequent result.

5. This verse is explanatory of the preceding, showing that faith has its power to overcome because it is allied with the life of the Son of God. In ver. 1 it is stated that the one believing that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; here the one believing that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world. Jesus overcame the world; he alone overcame the world in all its powers, in the center of its being. There may be reformations that are not accompanied with a belief in Jesus. A heathen man, an agnostic, an atheist, may be a lover of right-doing in a large sense. But this right-doing may be due to the unconscious work of Christ upon the heart, even when he is not known by name (*John 1:10*); it may be owing to the development of a moral power in the world wrought by Christ, and having influence upon all men in a Christian community. The conquest of the world as a whole can be accomplished only through Jesus. No thorough reconstruction of a life or of society can be wrought except through the influence and power of Jesus. Regeneration is a vastly larger word, including a vastly larger work than reformation. Regeneration will lead to reformation, to self-dedication, to sanctification, to a moral likeness to God, to the conquest of all evil.

III. 6-13. THE TESTIMONY BY WHICH THE BELIEVER IS ASSURED THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD. We have had Jesus presented to us as the source of light, the fellowship with him creating light in us. He is also the source of righteousness in us inasmuch as he is righteous.

In the entire preceding part the discussion has centered about the person and work of Jesus. There is now presented the human and divine testimony to Jesus Christ as the ground of our faith in him. We have two sources of testimony: first, that which arises from history, the witnessing that can be appealed to on the part of eye and ear-witnesses; secondly, the testimony of the Spirit, the witness of the spiritual life to its own reality, a witness that must be true because the Spirit is the truth itself. The religion of Jesus Christ is not based on feelings or intuitions incapable of historical verification—it is a religion of fact. This refers to the person, Jesus Christ, of whom this letter is full. Jesus came into the world by an incarnation (*John 1:11*), but it is not to this coming that John here refers.

Jesus came into his Messianic office by, through, or, by means of, the water; at his baptism there was a formal introduction to his public ministry. The water and the blood stand for the terminal points of his ministry, the opening and the closing parts. Both of them bear witness to his Sonship, and declare him to be the Son of God. It may be assumed that the terms water and blood refer to some definite historical events in the life of our Lord upon the earth. They are, therefore, not to be interpreted in a symbolic way. Many interpretations of this passage are given. (1) Clement of Alexandria, about A. D. 200, thought that the water stood for regeneration and faith, and the blood the public acknowledgment of these. (2) Some have thought that the terms here used declare the one fact—that Jesus was a true man in opposition to those who held that his body was not a real body. In this view the blood and water stand for the constituents of a physical organization. (3) Grotius and others hold that the water stands for purity of life, indicating thereby that Jesus lived a spotless life. But inasmuch as the blood represents literal blood, it can-

6 This is he that came <sup>b</sup> by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. <sup>1</sup> And it

6 This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and

<sup>a</sup> Matt. 3 : 13-17. John 19 : 31, 35.

<sup>i</sup> John 16 : 13; 1 Tim. 3 : 16.

not be supposed that the term water is used in a symbolic way. (4) Calvin and others understand by water the ordinance of baptism which Jesus appointed as a perpetual ordinance. According to this view the water represents the cleansing of the heart, and the blood represents the ransom which Jesus made. The two, therefore, stand for the means by which salvation is effected. But it is not probable that Jesus would have joined the outward ordinance of baptism, and put it on an equality with the blood of reconciliation. The shedding of the blood was essential to human salvation: baptism, because appointed as a binding ordinance, is essential to obedience, but not to salvation. Inasmuch also as the blood pertains to something personal to Christ himself—his own blood shed for men—the water must also pertain to something belonging to his own personal life. It cannot, therefore, refer to a baptism appointed by him to be observed by others. (5) Alford and others think that the terms water and blood refer to the incident mentioned in John 19 : 34, 35, when water and blood flowed from the pierced side of Christ. It was John himself who alone noticed the mysterious and miraculous flow of water and blood from the Saviour's side. This indicates not only the reality of his death, the material character of his body, but also the redemptive character of his work. The stream of water revealed the fountain of life opened for us; it revealed also the removal of guilt and condemnation effected through the blood of sacrifice. Against this view is the statement of John that the water, the blood, the Spirit, each bears its own distinct testimony. In the stream flowing from his side it was a united stream, there was no special significance of the water as distinct from the blood. The water and the blood are separate witnesses. (6) The view having most to commend it is that which refers the water to the baptism of Jesus, the initial act in his Messianic course, the blood referring to the crucifixion, the termination of

his Messianic career. They unitedly testify to his real manhood, his actual death.

They bear witness also to his divine nature, his Sonship, declaring that Jesus is the Son of God. It was at his baptism the Spirit rested on him, and he was endowed with power from on high (John 3 : 34). It was at his baptism that John knew Jesus to be the Son of God (John 1 : 34). Jesus came by water, inasmuch as it was by means of his baptism that he entered on his work as the Messiah. Here accompanying the baptism were the descending dove, the opened heavens, the uttered voice, the convinced disciple, the public recognition of his Sonship. Connected with the baptism is the crucifixion of Jesus. The one embraced the other. The pouring out of the blood was the completion of the baptism which he had to be baptized with (Mark 10 : 38, 39). As the baptism embraces all the surrounding incidents, the dove, the voice, in like manner the blood, stands for all the things that accompany the crucifixion. Here was the voluntary death, the mysterious flowing of the mingled water and blood, the enveloping darkness for three hours, the impress made on the dying robber, the impress made on the Roman centurion leading him to feel that there was something supernatural about the sufferer on the cross. These accompanying things bore witness to the divinity of the sufferer. These two events, marking the beginning and ending of his ministry, unite to show the truth of John's affirmation that Jesus is the Son of God. **Not by water only**, literally, *in the water*. The preposition is here changed to one signifying the element in which. The definite article shows that these terms have been used before, and gives a great solemnity and emphasis to the statement. The errors against which John is contending must be borne in mind. There were those who declared that it was impossible for a divine being to suffer a death on the cross. Inasmuch as Jesus suffered a death on the cross, they said that he

is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record [in heaven], the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in

in the blood. And the Spirit is that which testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify; the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one.

*f* Matt. 3 : 17.    *k* John 1 : 1; Rev. 19 : 13.

*l* Matt. 3 : 16.

*m* Deut. 6 : 4; Matt. 28 : 19; John 10 : 30.

was not divine. John therefore solemnly declares that Jesus, the Son of God, came not only in baptism, dedicating himself in a prophetic way to a future dying, but also he came in blood, in suffering. John declared the essence of his own ministry to be a baptism in water alone (John 1 : 25). He pointed to Jesus as the one taking away the sin of the world, the Lamb of God (John 1 : 29). **By water and blood**, rather, *in the water and in the blood*. The Redeemer was identified and revealed as the Son of God in the baptism, and also as the Lamb of God on the cross; the one pointing to the other, the one of no moral import without the other. John protests in this manner against those in his day who united the Christ to Jesus at his baptism, but separated them at the cross. There is no direct reference in water and blood to the baptism and Lord's Supper of to-day, but it remains true that the baptism and the Supper show the death, the resurrection of Jesus, declare him to be living, and to be remembered until he return. These two ordinances, therefore, exhibit Jesus as a divine being; one who rose from the dead, and who sustains the spiritual life of men. They testify to his divine nature, his Sonship.

**Spirit** refers to the Holy Spirit though various other meanings have been given to the term. The water and the blood were facts, the Spirit is a witness. The Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism. The Spirit testifies of Christ (John 15 : 26), glorifies him, and shows of the things that belong to him (John 16 : 14). Through the possession of the Spirit we know that we have Christ (3 : 24).

7, 8. All of ver. 7, after the word **record**, must be omitted, and all the words in ver. 8 up to and including the word, **earth**. The two verses will read, *For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one*. The

omitted words are not found in any Greek manuscript of the New Testament prior to the sixteenth century. It is a thing incredible that a genuine passage should be wanting in all the early Greek manuscripts. It is not found in the early versions of the New Testament rendered into other languages. It was never used by the fathers in the Arian controversy, in the fourth century, when the doctrine of the person of Christ was under discussion. Had it been in the original it is impossible that it could have dropped out, for it contains the clearest statement in the New Testament of the doctrine of a trinity in unity. The only traces of this passage are in some of the Latin Fathers. It first appears at the end of the fifth century. It doubtless was first written on the Margin as a comment, and then by some copyist transferred into the text. The Old Testament required that the testimony of two or three witnesses should coincide (Deut. 17 : 6). Here three witnesses unite in their testimony. In ver. 6 the Spirit was named last; here he stands first as the abiding witness, the personal witness, one divine in character. The **Spirit** testified at the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3 : 16, 17); Christ was clothed with power by the Spirit (Luke 4 : 18); the Spirit bore witness to his Messiahship, after his ascension, by endowing the disciples with power and accompanying their messages so that men were won to Christ. He bears the same testimony in every conversion when a soul turns to Jesus, led thereto by a sense of sin. He is that same witness to whom Jesus appeals in his last discourses recorded by John. The testimony of the blood is later in time than that of the water, the testimony of the Spirit accompanies the others, and continues in an unbroken way ever since. In John's day the Spirit gave extraordinary testimony. In all the ages since, the Spirit has begotten new agencies for work, has been chang-

earth], the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

9 If we receive <sup>a</sup>the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: <sup>b</sup>for this is the witness of God which he hath 10 testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God <sup>c</sup>hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God

9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; because this is the testimony of God, that he has testified concerning his Son. 10 He that believes on the Son of God has the testimony in himself; he that be-

*n* John 8 : 17, 18.

*o* Matt. 3 : 16, 17; 17 : 5.

*p* Ps. 25 : 14; Rom. 8 : 16; Gal. 4 : 6.

ing savage natures in the mission fields into Christlikeness, has been creating a Christian civilization, has raised up martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the truth—in all these ways the Spirit has been a living witness. Christ must be a divine person in order to work such changes in men and nations. The **water**, the baptism of Christ and its surroundings, bore witness to the Sonship of Jesus (Matt. 3 : 16, 17). The voice from the skies was an uncontested proof to John that Jesus was the Son of God. There may be also an implied allusion to baptism as administered among us. The burial in water is a reminiscence of the burial of Christ; the rising from the water is a symbolic statement that Jesus rose from the dead. The believer's burial and resurrection is the only symbolic act in the world that speaks of the resurrection of Jesus. In so far, therefore, may the act of believer's baptism to-day be a witness of the divinity of Jesus. In every case where it is administered there is the public declaration that Jesus is believed to be the Son of God. The **blood**. The allusion here is undoubtedly to the blood shed on the cross, it also bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. All the circumstances attending his death, the rending of the veil, the supernatural darkness can be explained only on the supposition that the sufferer was a divine person. The darkness in the soul of the spotless Christ, the rent veil of the temple, the willing submission to death, these unite to show that he made an atonement for sin. This also was a testimony to his divine character. There may also be a reference to the Lord's Supper as celebrated to-day, a memorial meal whose observance can be traced back to the first century. **Agree in one.** The apostle declares that the testimony of the three

witnesses converges to one truth. He does not say that there are no other witnesses. John gives us, in a concise way, a treatise on the evidences of Christianity.

9. There is here a contrast between the relative authority of human and divine testimony. We are so made that we rely on human testimony. A large part of our knowledge is gained thereby. **Of God.** If God speaks there is no possible deception or partial representation. **For this . . . Son,** rather, *for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son.* In the Old Testament is an entire series of attestations through sacrifice and prophet concerning the Son to be revealed. (See John 5 : 46.) In the New Testament the evangelists and apostles give their testimony concerning the Son. This witness is mainly through man, though it is really God's testimony. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1 : 21). The testimony especially spoken of here is that divine teaching through the Holy Spirit. "We are his witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5 : 32). We find in the next verse what the testimony is. It is treating God with contempt to receive and act on human testimony, and yet disregard the testimony of God concerning his Son, the express image of himself.

10. This verse gives the testimony concerning the Son. **Witness in himself.** This witness is the fruit of all evidence, the deep conviction that Jesus is the Son of God. The peace in the heart, the new conceptions of life, the overcoming strength in life, the influence of the gospel in the life—these show that the belief in Jesus is not a delusion, but a source of strength. The Sonship of Jesus is needed as a fitting cause to effect this result. The witness

hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave 11 of his Son. And this is the record, 12 <sup>a</sup>that God hath given to us eternal life, and <sup>b</sup>this life is in his Son. <sup>c</sup>He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

*A reason for writing; faith in prayer.*

13 <sup>d</sup>THESE things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; <sup>e</sup>that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 <sup>f</sup>And this is the confidence that we

lieves not God has made him a liar; because he has not believed in the testimony which God has testified concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has the life; he that has not the Son of God has not the life.

13 These things have I written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

14 And this is the confidence that we

<sup>g</sup> John 5 : 24.      <sup>r</sup> 4 : 9; John 1 : 4.  
<sup>u</sup> Ver. 10; Rom. 8 : 15-17; 2 Peter 1 : 10, 11.

<sup>s</sup> John 3 : 36.      <sup>t</sup> John 20 : 31.  
<sup>x</sup> 3 : 22; Eph. 3 : 12.

here is an internal testimony which is produced by a conscious forgiveness symbolized by the water of baptism, the reconciliation through the blood, the work of the Spirit in the heart, these three agreeing in one to produce a settled conviction in the heart. **Believethe not.** This is a distinct act of the moral nature; it is resistance, unbelief, rejection. **Liar.** Once before has John made use of this strong term (1 : 10). God hath borne witness concerning his Son. To refuse the claim of Jesus is to be in rebellion against God.

11. We have here a completer definition of that to which God hath borne witness. The end and aim of all that God witnessed is that God's own life might be given us through Jesus. **In his Son.** Paul speaks of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation through the Son; John speaks of something deeper—the possession of the very life of the Son himself. An intellectual and moral quickening must come from this life imparted and dwelling in the heart. (See John 1 : 4; 11 : 25; 14 : 6; Col. 3 : 3.)

12. Jesus has eternal life in himself. **Hath life,** rather, *the life*. To be a Christian is to have the Christ life within and without. He gives the opposite—**hath not life,** rather, *the life*. This verse is a repetition of John 5 : 24. He depicts, in an awful form, the condition of the unbeliever. He may have wealth, genius, power, pleasure, but he does not have God's own life. The doctrine of annihilation of the unbeliever, the extinction of the soul, the shriveling into nothingness, does not follow from this statement.

Death does not mean extinction, but the separation from the true and blessed life. The man who walks in God's way lives, the man who turns his back on God, ignoring him or disobeying him, is walking in the road of a present death.

13. This verse corresponds with 1 : 4. He refers to all that he has written, not to the preceding verses only. The Revised version reads, *These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.* It is a message to the believer, not in any degree to the ungodly. **Name** is equivalent to the person. He is called Jesus because he saves from sins. He is called Christ because he is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy, the anointed. Knowing of eternal life, of God's testimony concerning the Son, having accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord, they are entitled to assurance.

IV. 14-17. FAITH IN THE PROMISES OF GOD LEADS TO PREVAILING PRAYER. Possession of eternal life is a safeguard against the allurements of false teaching in all ages. God is not merely a great sovereign, but a Father, a counselor, a friend, a helper. John comes, in this passage, to a practical help to them in their daily living, their God is a prayer-hearing God.

14. Because we have a spiritual life we have confidence in God. Paul declares that we have not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of adoption (Rom. 8 : 15). John delights to use the term **confidence**, rather, **boldness** (2 : 28; 3 : 21; 4 : 17). One of the ways in which

have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: 15 and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them

have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us: 15 us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked of him.

16 If any one see his brother sinning a sin not to death, he shall ask, and he will give him life,—to those who sin

y Mark 11 : 24.

x Exod. 32 : 10-14; 2 Chron. 30 : 18-20, Job 42 : 7-9, James 5 : 14-20.

this boldness is expressed in prayer. **Ask.** Prayer is not simply desire unexpressed, but petition embodied in a request that comes before God. **According to his will.** In 3 : 22 it was taught that prayers are answered for those doing God's will. Not every desire is prayer. All prayer, in John's sense of this term, is answered. It is to be made in the name of Christ (John 14 : 13), which does not mean that the name of Christ is to be affixed to the petition, but that it is a prayer in accord with the nature of Christ, is formed in accord with the mind of Christ. The one so asking is guided by the Spirit of Christ in the prayer (Rom. 8 : 26). Such a prayer will, of necessity, be in accord with the will of God, because begotten by the Spirit of God. He can, with assurance, ask only for that which the Spirit of Christ makes known to him in prayer as corresponding to the Father's will. Prayer cannot be considered as constraining the will of God, but the bringing to pass of the divine will does not exclude, but the rather includes, all the intermediate and secondary causes. Prominent among these intermediate causes is prayer; it is one of the highest acts of a spirit in relation to God. So certainly will prayer be heard that Christians, while they pray, should be inspired with the assurance that what they ask will be received.

15. This verse is intimately joined with the preceding. **If we know.** The condition that we ask in accord with his will is here omitted. **We know.** This certainty arises from our knowledge of God as a covenant-keeping God, from his promise to hear prayer, from the experience of the believer. **Desired.** He implies that not one petition has been wasted, all have been heard. Compare the words of Jesus (Mark 11 : 24). Prayer is looked upon as the central point of the Chris-

tian life. Prayers not answered, as Paul's prayer in 2 Cor. 12 : 8, are found to be reasons for thanksgiving. Prayers are not commands to God, but requests from God. Jesus prayed, subject to this law. "Not my will, but thine be done" (Matt. 26 : 39). The answer to the prayer may be delayed, even if finally granted. The delay may be for the testing of the faith, or because its immediate answer might involve a miracle, or because the condition of the petitioner might not warrant an immediate answer.

16. From praying for one's self John turns to praying for others—intercessory prayer. This springs from confidence in God and a concern for the erring brother. **See** indicates the brotherly watchcare that should characterize the Christian household. **Brother** is to be taken in its strict sense, limited to the fellow-disciple of Christ. **Sinning.** This shows that John's statement as to the life apart from sin (3 : 6) must, in some way, be qualified. He does not describe a sinless Christian life. In the presence of the sinning brother he will make request for him. The future tense implies a certainty of so doing, involving also the hint of a command. This prayer will be for God's forgiveness, for God's restraining grace that the sin lead not to its logical result of complete alienation from God. There are implied the admonition, the penitence, the joining of him in the prayer. There is the same assurance here as in the former case of forgiveness. Who shall give life, the one who prays, as in the Received version, or God, as in the Revised version? God alone can in any proper sense bestow life. But John is speaking of the one praying as the agent through whom God works, he bestows life. In like manner James speaks of one converting a soul, saving it from death (James 5 : 19). **Life** means

that sin not unto death. <sup>a</sup>There is a sin unto death: <sup>b</sup>I do not say that he 17 shall pray for it. <sup>c</sup>All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

*a* Mark 3:29.

*b* Jer. 7:16, 14:11.

*c* 3:4.

not to death. There is a sin to death: not concerning that do I say that he 17 shall make request. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin not to

the large spiritual life whose presence would fill the soul and restrain it from a fatal sin; it would repair the partial death that had already exhibited itself in the manifested sin. **Sin unto death.** This means a sin that leads toward death, that ends in death. Two meanings may be given to the term death. (1) It may refer to physical death, in which case the sin committed would lead to the penalty of death upon the body. Such a case would but rarely occur, so rare that it would not be mentioned in a general discussion such as is contained in this letter (Eph. 2:2). It cannot mean dead in sin here, for it would not be improper to pray for a person dead in sin that he might have life in the heart, nor would it be assuredly known that he would continue in this state of spiritual death. (2) The term is sometimes made use of to indicate the penalty that comes upon the finally impenitent, called the second death (Rev. 2:11). The reference is to an act of sin, something definite, not to a state of sin. This is evident from the consideration that the sin that may be forgiven is an act of sin. The two stand in contrast with each other, an act must correspond with an act. Jesus alludes to a sin that is not forgiven, here or hereafter, a sin unto death (Matt. 12:31, 32). If any one commit this sin, done openly in the sight of all, a sin whose nature is patent to all, for this sin there is no forgiveness. For such a sin no one need pray. This sin cannot be regarded as some merely atrocious sin like murder, but that complete abandonment of life in Christ, culminating in the act of apostasy from Christ, the surrender of the inner union with Christ. In Matt. 12:31 it is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the open, slanderous attack on the holiness of Christ's person and work. In Heb. 6:6 it is the act of apostasy in turning finally and completely from the eternal life in Christ obtained through the atonement, the preference of the mere animal sacrifices

to the divine offering of the person of Christ. John has dwelt upon the awfulness of the antichristian doctrine (2:22), the denial that Jesus Christ is the Son of God come in the flesh. Life is union with Christ (5:12); death is the separation from Christ. Eternal death, a term not itself used in the New Testament, but abundantly taught, is that final and complete act of the soul by which Christ is abjured, denied, surrendered, the passing out of a state of knowledge into the intelligent denial of his person and of life through him. John resolves sins into two classes: the sin not unto death, the sin unto death. What is to be the attitude of the believer to the latter sin; does John forbid prayer for such a person? There is a sin, positive, definite, that yet belongs to the unrighteousness spoken of in 1:9 for which is forgiveness through the blood, upon repentance. Alford thinks that John intends to prohibit prayer for such a person, implying that it would be an act of presumption, unduly interfering with the exercise of God's judgment. Neander thinks that what John means is expressed in the thought, that the prayer for such a person finds no warrant for an answer as in the case of prayer for the sin not unto death. John changes the word used for prayer from ask (*aiteo*) in the first case, to request (*erotao*) in the second case. The asking is the stronger term; that made use of by an inferior, and hence never used by Christ in his petitions. John says, concerning this sin I do not speak in what I say about intercessory prayer, implying the almost hopeless result that must ensue if prayer be offered. There is the widest opportunity for intercessory prayer, inasmuch as the case supposed would not be found in one man in a million. More persons will be lost by continuing in unbelief; the persistent sinning with the heart, even while the intellectual judgment concerning Christ is correct; the sinning that leads inevitably to

*The distinction between God's children and the wicked.*

18 We know that <sup>d</sup> whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is be-

18 death. We know that every one who has been begotten of God sins not;

*d 3 : 9; 1 Peter 1 : 23.*

death, than by the specific sin spoken of here by John.

**NOTE.—BROTHERLY WATCHCARE.** Intercessory prayer springs from the nature of the Christian life; the man who loves his brother cannot cease to pray for him (1 Sam. 7 : 8). The strongest characters in the Christian life have felt the need of the prayers of others. See the words of Paul (1 Thess. 5 : 25). John draws a dividing line between the erring weak Christian who is yet a Christian, and the perverse denier of the fundamentals of the truth who had joined the recognized antichristian forces. For this one there is not much encouragement to pray, though even here, upon repentance, God grants forgiveness. The reason why forgiveness is not granted is not so much because the sin itself puts one beyond the pale of forgiveness, as that the hardening process in the heart steadily goes on whereby it becomes impossible for appeals to move it; the man is self-hardened, so that sin and guilt remain supreme; he is joined to his sin (Hosea 4 : 17). Jesus prayed for Peter (Luke 22 : 32); Peter, when in jail, was prayed for (Acts 12 : 5); Jesus yet prays for men, it is a part of his work (Rom. 8 : 34); the strong must bear the burdens of the weak (Gal. 6 : 2). Jesus went after the man who had been put out of the synagogue (John 9 : 35). The strength of each Christian should be as the strength of ten on account of the counsel, the fellowship, the prayer of others. Tennyson writes:

For what are men better than sheep or goats

That nourish a blind life in the brain;  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of  
prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call  
them friend?

**V. 18-21. THE ASSURED BELIEFS OF THE CHRISTIAN.** In this closing section we have three statements made by John, introduced by **we know.** There is a true Gnosticism, a real Chris-

tian knowledge, as well as a false and unreal Gnosticism. These sum up, as it were, the great teachings of this letter. In the first statement we have the fundamental opposition between life from God and sin, which is death (ver. 18). We have, in the second, the fundamental antagonism between the regenerate and the world (ver. 19). We have in the third, the Christian declaration concerning the divine nature of Jesus and the relation to him of the Christian as one abiding in him (ver. 20). There is a fellowship with God in his life and holiness; there is a fellowship with each other in the church as against the world; there is a conscious adoration of Jesus as the Son of God, and the affirmation of life in him. There is the final statement, in the appeal, of the essential nature of God as spirit, as light, as the absolute one, of whom no representation can be made.

**18. Born, rather, begotten.** The knowledge here asserted arises from a knowledge of God as holy. In the moral as in the physical universe like begets like. This same statement is made in 3 : 9. **Sinneth not.** We may not dilute this statement by saying that the believer does not sin habitually, or wilfully, or as in former unregenerate times. The statement stands out in its absoluteness as the ideal of the Christian life. This is the conception of every Christian life; it of necessity must be. The very nature of the regenerate life as begotten of God is to be like God, and therefore without sin. The regenerate life is inconsistent with all sin—all kinds of sin—both the sin unto death and the sin not unto death. That there are sins in the actual life is evident from the confession made in 1 : 8, a confession of sinning in which John joins himself. In ver. 6 also he implies that many will need the intercession of others. The expression *begotten* is in the perfect tense, implying that one who has been begotten retains the divine life. When the work of Christ, begun

gotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.  
19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

e 3 : 3; Ps. 39 : 1; Prov. 4 : 23-27; James 1 : 27; Jude 20, 21.

but he that was begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one touches him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world is lying in the evil

f Ver. 13; 3 : 14, 24.

g Rom. 3 : 9-19.

at regeneration, is complete, when the actual gives way to the ideal, then the sinning life will pass into the sinless life. There remain in the believer the traces of corruption which beget a struggle and strife in the life. Sin does not reign in the believer's heart, but it fights. The concluding part of the verse gives the reason for the statement, **but . . . self.** **Is begotten**, rather, *was begotten*, in the aorist tense showing the definite time of turning to Christ in the new life. There is the divine life imparted in regeneration; there is the co-operating human spirit by which the newly begun life is watched over. In 3 : 3 the believer purifies himself. Jude exhorts the believer to keep himself in the love of God (ver. 21). A man cannot save himself, but God does not save a man apart from his own conscious effort. It is not correct to render this as meaning that regeneration keeps a man, or that the Son of God keeps a man. John emphasizes here the human side of salvation. God keeps the believer—the believer also keeps himself. **That wicked one**, rather, *the evil one*. This refers to Satan, the evil one pre-eminently who seduced Adam (Gen. 3 : 6); who tempted Jesus (Matt. 4 : 1); who filled the heart of Judas (John 13 : 2); who beguiled Peter for a time (Luke 22 : 31). The **touceth** refers to a touching that hurts, that seduces the inner life, and breaks away a heart from Christ. The man spoken of in 1 Cor. 5 : 1-5; Hymeneus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2 : 17) and Demas (2 Tim. 4 : 10) were hurt by Satan. There will remain for the believer, as long as life lasts, the assaults of Satan, which are to be successfully resisted (1 Peter 5 : 9); Satan himself will, in time, be put under the believer's feet (Rom. 16 : 20). Jesus could say, "He hath nothing in me." The believer begotten into the same mold as Christ may overcome Satan, and in time will be developed a nature in which will be nothing to which Satan can appeal. God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are for

and in the believer; against him is the evil world, and evil heart, and the evil one.

**19.** This verse declares the spiritual state of John and his readers, and therefore by necessity the unspiritual state of the world which is under the control of the evil one. **We know . . . God.** This knowledge arises from the conformity of the conduct to the revealed will of God, their delight in God. The Christian life may be tested by standards given in this letter: the love for the brethren, the overcoming life, the life of righteousness, the open confession of Christ. He speaks in a tone of confidence as to their spiritual condition. The Christian of to-day may have the same assurance, not from emotions or apparitions, but from the likeness of the heart to God. By contrast the world stands out of harmony with God, as opposed to God, as lying in the domain and under the control of the evil one. **In wickedness**, rather, *in the evil one*, the one mentioned in the preceding verse. God and Satan are the opposite spiritual and moral poles. It is not said that the world is begotten of the evil one, which would imply a fixed moral condition, but it **lieth in**, remains under the control of the evil one, in a willing way. It is possible for one to pass out of the world into the family of God, for Jesus is the propitiation of the world (2 : 2; 4 : 14). There is a wide contrast in character between the regenerate, finding their life in and from God, and the unregenerate, finding all their life, in its nature and conduct, against God, in the evil one. Jesus was in the world that his followers might be spiritually minded, for worldly mindedness is the essence of the unchristian life. It is implied that the powers and tendencies of the present age are largely under the control of that evil being called the god of this world. The kingdom of God is the opposite of the world. Because Jesus died for the entire world, every man is savable through Christ.

**20** <sup>b</sup> And we know that the Son of God is come, and <sup>i</sup> hath given us an understanding, <sup>k</sup> that we may know him that is true, <sup>j</sup> and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>m</sup> This is the true God, and eternal life.

20 one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us understanding, that we may know the True One; and we are in the True One, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

*b* 4 : 2, 14.      *i* Matt. 13 : 11; John 17 : 25, 26; 2 Cor. 4 : 6.      *k* John 14 : 6; Rev. 3 : 7.

*t* John 14 : 20; 17 : 20-23.      *m* Isa. 9 : 6; John 1 : 1-3; 20 : 28; Acts 20 : 28; Titus 2 : 13; Heb. 1 : 8.

**NOTE.** JOHN'S CONCEPTION OF SATAN. Everything that John says concerning this subject is serious and solemn in tone. He has nothing that is merely poetical, and is at the farthest remove from any grotesque conception of him. Throughout this letter, as in his Gospel, is the dark background of a personal evil being. It is not evil in the abstract, but evil embodied in a person. He does nothing to clear up the mystery of evil, its origin or its continuance in the government of a holy and almighty God. He does not explain the origin of Satan. He simply reveals Satan as a god of this world, having a large controlling moral influence over the ungodly. John finds no place in his theology for any person except in allegiance to God or in allegiance to Satan. To pass away from God is to pass into the kingdom of the evil one. Jesus is regarded as the conquering Christ. He that is with the believer is one mightier than all the foes arrayed against him (4 : 4). In great contrast with a modern light and flippant way of speaking of Satan is the impressive manner in which John looks upon the invisible, but real and terrible kingdom of darkness. In some countries the heathen pray to the evil spirits so that they may not be harmed; in some countries a chief delusion of Satan is the persuasion that he does not exist; with Paul (Eph. 5 : 11-18) John regards, in a grave and serious way, the unseen evil agencies that lay wait for the souls of men.

**20.** A third we know is presented to us. Under this general statement we have grouped four assured beliefs. (1) That the Son of God has come and is present with us. (2) That he has given an understanding heart by which we know God. (3) That we have a fellowship with God and jointly also with the Son, Jesus Christ. (4) That the God so revealed to us is the true

God, and the knowledge of him is true and eternal blessedness. **Is come.** John looks upon Jesus as a person abiding in the world—one who came and is now present. Jesus makes use of the same expression concerning himself in John 8 : 44. **Understanding.** Through the Holy Spirit there had been begotten an intellectual and moral apprehension of God, creating the power by which believers judge aright concerning spiritual things. This inner sense is predominantly spiritual rather than intellectual. **Know him.** The result of this spiritual insight is that we know God aright, have true conceptions of him. John alludes here to the many false conceptions of God that were prevalent in the first century. **True** is the opposite, not of false, but of the unreal, the imaginary. **In him.** There is a conscious fellowship with this personal God, an indwelling in him, a living under his control. *In God* and *in the evil one* are in contrast with each other. The dwelling in God is the result of the indwelling in Jesus, the Son. **This.** To whom does this term apply, to the Son or to God? In favor of the reference to the Son are the following considerations: it is said (1) That the grammatical construction favors it, Christ being the immediate antecedent of the pronoun, this. (2) The expression **eternal life** is naturally applied to Jesus Christ in whom life dwells. (See John 1 : 4.) It is said that eternal life was manifested to us through Jesus Christ (1 : 2). Jesus being the source of eternal life, he alone can be referred to. (3) The reference of this to God would make the assertion a mere truism, the declaration that the true God is himself the true God and eternal life. (4) This reference to the Son is in accord with the teachings of John in all his writings, the oneness of Jesus with the Father. (5) The natural interpretation, that which comes first to the mind of the

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. | 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

n 1 Cor. 10 : 7, 14; 2 Cor. 6 : 16, 17.

ordinary reader, is that John is predicating this statement of Jesus. But against this view are the following weightier considerations: (1) The main thought of this passage is not Jesus Christ; **him that is true**, that is God himself. It is God who is kept most prominently in mind. This refers naturally back, not to the immediately preceding word, but to the predominant word of the passage, God. For instances of *this* referring not to the immediately preceding word, see 2 : 22; 2 John 7. (2) The expression, *eternal life*, is in favor of the reference to God. This life in its fulness, in its primary sense, is found in God. (3) The drift of the passage, the connection of thought, is in favor of the reference to God rather than to the Son. The prominent thought is this: this God, with whom believers stand in fellowship, is the only true God, and hence is the primary source of eternal life; through him alone can we become partakers of eternal life, the highest of all conceivable good. In closing this letter John points to the primal source, to Him who is himself that eternal life which, from its source in God, was imparted to the Son that he might impart it to us. In an impressive way, in closing, John assures us that that one manifested to us through the Son is the true God in whom all blessedness resides. That John is speaking of God is also apparent from the appeal in the last verse. It is the worship of God himself that is always put in contrast with the worship of idols. It is that God who is presented to us as the closing thought of the letter.

**21.** Here is a parting warning against idol worship. To hold fast this highest possession believers must guard themselves from all contact with the idols worshiped by a world lying in the wicked one. In every town where had been formed a church of Christ was also the idol temple. Many doubtless of John's readers had come from heathenism; for them to leave Christ would be to fall again into the old life. **Little children**, rather, *my little children*. Thus affectionately does he

close his letter. **Idols.** This refers to external images of imaginary deities yet remaining in heathenism. John had not alluded to these in his letter before this, nor was the main danger to his readers from this source. The dangers alluded to were those arising from philosophical speculations, Gnostic errors, the denial that Christ had a true human nature, which errors had a close connection with systems that were at enmity with Christianity. The term, *idols*, must therefore have a large interpretation. It is a solemn warning against everything that interferes with the absolute supremacy and sovereignty of God. John urges, therefore, that his readers abide in God, because to depart from God is to fall into the kingdom of wickedness, under the power of him that is the opposite of that God who is the true one, the possessor of the eternal blessedness. There may be an idolatry begotten by a love of the world, by an intellectual pride, just as real as the idolatry in India or Africa. **Amen.** This is to be omitted. John begins his letter with the manifesting Christ, he ends his letter with the manifested God.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. No one gets into God's kingdom without a personal acceptance of Christ. No birthright membership, no mechanical methods, no churchly rites can effect an entrance. Christ is the door, the Holy Spirit is the agent (ver. 1).

2. We cannot love Christ, the head, without loving Christians the members of Christ's body. Love makes all things easy. It is like wings that lift up, not weigh down. When God's will becomes our will, then the crosses of life disappear. Commands that seem harsh and impossible to the ungodly are pleasant and possible to the believer in Jesus (ver. 2, 3).

3. Hebrews gives a list of Old Testament men who overcame through their belief in God. Stephen (Acts 7 : 59), Antipas (Rev. 2 : 13) killed by persecutors, were also conquerors. It is better to overcome through sufferings than to be overcome

by the world with its honors and pleasures (ver. 4).

4. With the help of Christ all things that ought to be done can be done. The weakest saint plus the strong Saviour can accomplish the ends of right living (ver. 5).

5. For our sins it was needful that a mighty and sinless being intervene in our behalf to make for us an atonement. Jesus came not to be an example, though he is that, but to be a Saviour through a sacrifice. His baptism typified his baptism of blood (ver. 6).

6. The New Testament suffers no loss in having parts taken away that did not belong to the original text. The truth has nothing to lose, but everything to gain, in getting the very mind and words of the Spirit. We may rest implicitly on the integrity of the text of the New Testament (ver. 7).

7. We may not listen exclusively to the words of John or Jesus, but we may have the very facts before us which gave to them an assurance of salvation. We have also the abiding witness of the Spirit promised by Christ as a teacher (ver. 8).

8. It is unreasonable not to accept with the mind Christ and Christianity. We believe upon testimony and act in life upon probability. We have assurance of the facts that underlie the Christian system, than which nothing can be more sure. The unreasonableness of the unchristian life is equaled only by its wickedness (ver. 9).

9. Through the inner experience the Christian is assured that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the Spirit testifying in his own heart. A Christian may not be widely read in the Christian evidences, but he can say with the blind man, "One thing I know . . . I was blind, but now I see" (ver. 10).

10. Eternal life is obtained, not by the acceptance of a creed or by an outward reformation, but through the acceptance of a person.

11. The believer already has eternal life. He does not have it in its fulness as

he will have in heaven, but it is a life of the same kind (ver. 11, 12).

12. There are gradations in the Christian life. The larger the conceptions of the Christian life, the fuller the realization of the fellowship with Christ, the larger will be the assurance (ver. 13).

13. The Christian may come to God in boldness. Praying in confidence is not demanding from God, but is the laying of our requests before God in a suppliant way. The prayer that brings answer is that prayer begotten by the Holy Spirit, in accord with the will of God (ver. 14).

14. God is sometimes wise in refusing to grant our requests. A saint of God said: "I have lived long enough to thank God for refusing to hear many of my prayers" (ver. 15; Dan. 9. 20).

15. No one should live for himself alone. Each life should be a prayer meeting for others. Jesus prayed for the disciples; in like manner should the Christian pray. He who begins to care for others will end by caring more for himself (ver. 16).

16. There are grades of sinning, but no sin is a light sin. Each sin demands the blood of the Son of God for forgiveness. A little sin may lead to a larger sin. No one should walk near the edge of a precipice over which to fall is eternal death (ver. 17).

17. The Scriptures reveal to us what otherwise would be unknown to us—the existence of a great, spiritual, malignant being, who has designs upon us. He allures, tempts, deceives men. He can really harm us only through our own permission (ver. 18).

18. To abide in God is to abide in safety. To have eternal blessedness is to be assured against eternal death. If the heart is full of God and life, there will be no entrance for sin and death (ver. 20).

19. The progress of knowledge has driven polytheism and outward idolatry from civilized countries. But there is danger in an advancing civilization that the heart will be content with outward things. Idolatry, to-day, is the alienation of the heart from that life which finds its true end in God (ver. 21).

## II. JOHN

1 THE elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in <sup>a</sup>the

1 THE elder to the elect lady, and to her children, whom I love in truth,—

*a* 1 John 3:18; 3 John 1.

*b* John 8:32; Gal. 2:14.

In this letter the aged Apostle John sends words of affection, commendation, and counsel to some Christian woman, living, doubtless, in Asia Minor. He sends his greeting (ver. 1-3); expresses his joy over the conduct of her children (ver. 4); gives the law of Christian love (ver. 5, 6); admonishes her against false teachers (ver. 7-9); shows how to deal with false teachers (ver. 10); and expresses the hope of seeing her soon (ver. 12, 13).

I. 1-3. ADDRESS AND GREETING. We have in this section the name of the writer, the name of the person addressed, and the introduction. It is constructed on the general plan of Paul's introductions, incorporating the two thoughts that make up the teaching part of the letter, truth and love. The term truth occurs five times in this short letter, and love four times. It is a model Christian letter, uniting the personal element with the utterance of sound doctrinal teaching.

1. **The elder.** By this modest and unassuming term John designates himself. Peter, writing to the elders of the churches, styles himself "their fellow-elder" (1 Peter 5:1). This term, like that of apostle, has several meanings. It may be applied to one of the pastors of the individual church (*Titus* 1:5); to an older member of the church (1 Tim. 5:1); to one who belonged to the first generation of believers. When used as here with the article, it is a term of great significance, and would accord with the modesty of character habitual to John in the designation of himself. It would not be needful, it would seem violently out of place, for the last survivor of the apostolic group to assert his apostleship and authority

in a familiar personal letter, writing to one who would never think of him but with reverence. He is an elder in an especial sense, on account of age, reverence, position; the last one remaining of the Twelve who had been with the Lord Jesus. **Elect lady.** This expression is capable of a number of renderings, each of which is grammatically possible—to an elect lady; to the elect lady; to the elect Kuria; to the lady Electa. The Revised version adopts the second as the better rendering. Paul writes, "Rufus elect in the Lord" (Rom. 16:13); Peter writes to the "elect who are sojourners" (1 Peter 1:1). *Elect* is a term of Christian courtesy. The writings of Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 150-200, speak of her as Electa; but this cannot be the correct rendering, for ver. 13 speaks of her sister as "Electa." It is improbable that both women had the same name. It is far more probable that her name was Kuria, which name has been found among the inscriptions of the early Christians. Is John writing to a person or to a church? Many modern commentators think that the reference is to a church, either the church at large or some definite church. It is true that in the letter to the Ephesians, and in the book of Revelation, the church is looked upon as a woman, a bride. John apparently had met some of her children either in his visitation of the Asian churches, or in their presence at his home. Noting their Christian deportment he writes to their mother. That John should write to a Christian woman is not in itself to be wondered at when we recall how large a place women filled in the New Testament churches. **Whom I**

truth; and not I only, but also all they  
2 that have known the truth; for the  
truth's sake, which dwelleth in us,  
3 and shall be with us for ever. <sup>a</sup>Grace  
be with you, mercy, and peace, from  
God the Father, and from the Lord  
Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father,  
<sup>b</sup>in truth and love.

**4** I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy  
children walking in truth, as we have  
received a commandment from the  
Father.

and not I alone but also all that know  
2 the truth,—for the sake of the truth,  
which abides in us, and it will be with  
3 us forever: Grace, mercy, peace, shall  
be with us, from God the Father, and  
from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father,  
in truth and love.

**4** I rejoiced greatly, that I have found  
some of thy children walking in truth,  
as we received commandment from the

c Col. 3 : 16.

d 1 Tim. 1 : 2.

e Ver. 1.

f 1 Thess. 3 : 6-9; 3 John 3, 4.

**love.** The *whom* in the masculine  
embraces all the members of the house-  
hold. **In the truth.** This means not  
merely in a genuine way, but implying  
also that they are dwelling in the truth.  
**And not I only but all.** This  
Christian mother was well known  
through the Christian community, both  
at home and abroad. **Have known**  
**the truth,** rather, *know*. This designates  
the Christian community as those  
who have come into a personal ac-  
quaintance with Christ who is the  
truth. The introduction of the term  
*truth* is preparatory to the censure of  
those not holding the truth (ver. 7).

**2. For the truth's sake.** This  
expresses the reason for the love to-  
ward her.

**3. Grace . . . peace,** rather, *grace,*  
*mercy, peace shall be with us.* This is  
an apostolic desire with the assurance  
that the desire will come true. This  
group of words constitutes the apostolic  
benediction, summing up in a few  
words the essential contents of the  
divine revelation. This combination  
of words is found only in this passage  
and 1 Tim. 1 : 1; 2 Tim. 1 : 2. *Grace*  
refers to the favor of God, unmerited,  
original, springing up not in ourselves,  
but in God's gracious desires toward  
us, revealed in Christ. It has special  
reference to man's sin and guilt. The  
word is rare in John's writings, found  
only here and in John 1 : 14, 16, 17;  
Rev. 1 : 4; 22 : 21. *Mercy* has special  
reference to relieving the wretchedness  
and misery of men that spring from a  
guilty condition. It cannot therefore  
logically come first in the benediction.  
The order of the words is a statement  
of the divine procedure. *Peace* is the  
resultant of forgiveness, of regeneration,  
of adoption, the summing up of  
the possession of God. God's fellow-

ship brings God's own peace into the  
soul (Rom. 5 : 1; John 14 : 27). **From**  
**God . . . Christ,** rather, *from God*  
*the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the*  
*Son of the Father.* These all spring  
from their fountain in God; they are  
mediated through Christ. John does  
not think of God without also thinking  
of Jesus Christ, the two are inseparable  
(see 1 John 5 : 12). **In truth**  
**and love.** This expression does not  
declare that these blessings come upon  
them on account of these indwelling  
qualities, but in connection with them,  
not apart from them. The salvation  
of Christ is not through character,  
but always accompanies and creates  
character.

**II. 4-11. THE BODY OF THE LETTER.**  
**4.** John gives his unstinted praise  
before he gives a word of warning.  
John was inspired, he was also tactful.  
**I rejoiced.** In the aorist tense; so  
Bible Union version. This may refer  
to some definite time in the past, when  
he came upon her children and found  
them walking in Christian truth. The  
Revised version renders it in the present.  
*I rejoice.* This reveals John's  
Christian nature, sharing a joy with  
the children in their holy walk and  
desirous of contributing to the joy of the  
mother in notifying her of their life.  
John apparently came upon them in  
his journeys among the churches  
and homes. He had the care of the  
churches; he was also a shepherd of  
persons one by one. **Of thy children.**  
This does not assert or imply  
that some of her children were not  
walking in the truth. Those whom  
he met were walking in the light of  
the truth. **In truth,** which means  
living in the domain of the Christian  
religion, adorning the doctrines which  
they professed (Titus 2 : 11).

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, <sup>ε</sup> not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, <sup>h</sup> that we love one another. And <sup>i</sup>this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, <sup>k</sup>as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

6 For <sup>l</sup>many deceivers are entered into the world, <sup>m</sup>who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. <sup>n</sup>This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

7 Look to yourselves, <sup>p</sup>that we lose not those things which we have

5 Father. And now I ask thee, lady, not as writing to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandment; this is the commandment, that even as ye heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. Because many deceivers have gone out into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver, and the antichrist.

7 Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we wrought, but that

<sup>g</sup> 1 John 2 : 7, 8; 3 : 11.

<sup>h</sup> John 13 : 34; 1 Peter 4 : 8.

<sup>i</sup> John 14 : 15, 21; 15 : 10, 14; 1 John 5 : 3.

<sup>k</sup> 1 John 2 : 24.

<sup>l</sup> 1 John 2 : 18-22; 4 : 1.

<sup>m</sup> 1 John 4 : 2, 3. <sup>n</sup> 1 John 2 : 22; 4 : 3.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. 24 : 4, 24, 25.

<sup>p</sup> Gal. 3 : 4; Phil. 2 : 15, 16; Heb. 10 : 32, 35.

5. We come now to the real motive of the letter. **And now I beseech.** As an apostle he might command (see Philem. 8). Entreaty is oftentimes more potent than a command. The term rendered *beseech* implies that he had a right so to appeal to her. Walking in truth is walking in love as he now shows. **New.** See the same expression used 1 John 2 : 7. **From the beginning.** Especially of the new Christian era; love is seen to be the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13 : 8). The aim of this letter is, **that we love one another.** Had John heard something which indicated a want of love, or does he here make simply the appeal which would be fitting even to the angels? On this point we can make no answer.

6. **And this is love,** rather, *the love*, that is meant by the command that we walk in God's ways. All God's precepts are summed up in one commandment. **This . . . it,** rather, *This is the commandment, even as ye heard it from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.* The *it* refers to love. Beginning refers to the commencement of the Christian era. From the first there had been no deviation from this teaching that love must characterize the entire life.

7. John now puts her on her guard against false teachers. **For** shows the need of walking in the love that is founded on the truth. **Deceivers** refers to the teachers of false doctrines, centering mainly about the person of Christ. The **many** shows how full the first century was of defections from

the truth. It was more difficult to maintain the truth then than now, inasmuch as there was for the church no consensus of belief, embodied in creeds sanctioned by the test of centuries. **Are entered,** rather, *gone forth*, that is, partly from the church (1 John 2 : 19), partly from the world of darkness under the control of a personal perverting agency. The errors centered in the denial of an incarnation. **Who . . . flesh,** rather, *even they that confess not Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh.* Here the denial is not that an incarnation has taken place, but affirming that it cannot take place, the impossibility arising either from some limitation in God's nature whereby he is restrained from coming into a union with human nature, or from the sinfulness of matter, so that the Logos could not become flesh (John 1 : 14). **A deceiver and an antichrist,** rather, *the deceiver and the antichrist* (1 John 2 : 18-22). His appearance is perilous to the church, for he is *the deceiver, the one foretold, is opposed to Christ, is an antichrist, the one most dangerous to the cause of the Saviour.* No reference is here made to the second coming of Christ.

8. **Look to yourselves.** This is an expression of rare occurrence, indicating the serious matter here presented, also making manifest the danger incident to this false teaching. In 1 John 4 : 18 the believer is represented as keeping himself, here also is portrayed the duty of personal watchcare over one's self. The aim of looking at themselves is that **we lose not**, rather, *ye.* There is the prospect of loss, spir-

wrought, <sup>q</sup> but that we receive a full reward.

**9** <sup>r</sup> Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not <sup>s</sup> in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

**10** If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him

9 ye receive a full reward. Every one who leads forward, and abides not in the teaching of Christ, has not God. He that abides in the teaching, he has 10 both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you, and brings not this teaching, receive him not into your

*g Dan. 12:3.*

*r 1 John 2:23.*

*s John 7:16, 17; Heb. 6:1.*

itual and eternal, unless there is personal watchcare. **Have wrought.** This refers to the Christian state into which they had come, the Christian life upon which they had entered through the instruction of the apostles and others, their fellow-laborers, represented by **we**. Christ was the efficient agent of their salvation, but this was mediated to them through John and the apostles. Few or none of them had seen Christ in the flesh. **Full reward.** Believers are saved through grace and are rewarded according to their works. They are not saved on account of their works, but they are never saved apart from their works (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12). *Full* shows the varying rewards in the present and in the heavenly life (Luke 19:16-19). There are large possibilities in the Christian life, larger oftentimes than are realized. Notice the dwindling spiritual life of Heb. 5:11, 12, and the attainable peace spoken of in Rom. 5:1, R. V.

**9.** John here indicates a peril; that of going beyond Christ's teachings and incurring the loss of God's presence. An important variation in the text occurs here. **Whosoever...Christ,** rather, *whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ.* Jesus claimed a supremacy in teaching, claiming to be the truth itself and allowing no one to take a position alongside of himself. The Christian is one who accepts Christ as supreme in the example of living, in all matters of faith and conduct. This is not to be construed into a denial of progress in Christian thought or the impossibility of clearer conceptions of the Christian revelation in the ages to come. Almost every age has added somewhat to the stock of Christian doctrine. But always there must be a subordination to the completeness and supremacy of the teachings of Christ and the apostles in

the New Testament. **Abideth in the doctrine, teaching.** This means to hold it intellectually, and to put the life under its control. Through Jesus God is known, but the name of the Father stands first in the logical order (Matt. 11:27). Jesus Christ is redeemer, he is also teacher. We must trust to him alone for salvation; we must listen to him alone for instruction on the pathway of life, on the nature of the church, on the ordinances of the New Testament.

**10.** What must be the attitude of the believer toward false teachers? John here answers that question. **Doctrine,** rather, *teaching.* John alludes to the teaching of and concerning Christ. There was a general uniformity among the early Christians as to fundamental beliefs. Many of the New Testament writings were already current (2 Peter 3:16). The words of Jesus would be known among the churches. By these the Christians could test all teachings that came to them. John does not allude to a mere traveler coming in quest of a hospitable shelter, but to a teacher seeking to disseminate radically wrong teaching; an antichrist, denying the reality of the incarnation and salvation through Christ; this man seeking to spread a fatal teaching, is not to be welcomed into the house. It is not the man but the teacher that is to be thus seriously dealt with. It is not bigotry or intolerance or persecution that John urges, but such a steadfast love for the truth that his course may not indorse the error. John was naturally impulsive in character (Luke 9:51), but the command here rightly understood is in accord with the spirit of love. Without doubt many Christians have taken these words in a bitter spirit, and have treated errorists with cruelty, not warranted. But we must guard

- not into your house, <sup>t</sup>neither bid him  
11 God speed : <sup>u</sup>for he that biddeth him  
God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.  
12 <sup>v</sup>Having many things to write unto  
you, I would not *write* with paper and  
ink ; but I trust to come unto you, and  
speak face to face, <sup>w</sup>that our joy may  
be full.  
13 <sup>x</sup>The children of thy elect sister  
greet thee. Amen.

<sup>t</sup> Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8, 9.

<sup>u</sup> Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:22. <sup>z</sup> 3 John 13.

<sup>y</sup> John 17:13; Rom. 15:29, 30, 32; 1 John 1:4. <sup>z</sup> 1 Peter 5:13.

against laxity on the other hand. In Luke 9:50 Jesus reproves his disciples for forbidding one to cast out demons who did not outwardly move in Christ's company. The two teachings found in Luke 9:50 and in Matt. 12:30 must be taken together to get a full guidance for life. Not only must the false teacher not be received into the house, but believers are forbidden to **bid him God speed**, rather, *give him greeting*. This does not refer to the courtesy of the formal Christian greeting, but to the giving of such fellowship as shall imply a community of doctrine. There must be the garment free from the defilement of sin. The form of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13) and the right attitude toward the truth are essential, in the long run, to the steadfast Christian life and the supremacy of truth in the world.

**11.** This verse explains ver. 10. **Biddeth him God speed**, rather, *giveth him greeting*. Every believer must be a helper to the truth, not a hinderer. The truth is strong, but it must be witnessed to. Because Elijah did not bow the knee to Baal, seven thousand others were aided in their steadfastness. It is implied here that false teachers in the church must be first kindly counseled, then put outside of the church if they do not repent of their errors. **Evil deeds**. It is implied that false teachings lead to evil deeds, bad conduct. The denial of a fundamental belief will, in time, injure the church, the truth, and individual souls.

**III. 12, 13. THE CONCLUSION.** **12.** The apostle's heart and mind are full of personal affection and of the desire to help the cause of the truth. **Paper** was made from the Egyptian papyrus. **Ink** from soot, water, and gum or resin. In 3 John 9 he mentions

- 11 house, and give him no greeting ; for  
he that gives him greeting shares in  
his evil works.  
12 Having many things to write to you,  
I was not willing to write with paper  
and ink ; but I hope to come to you,  
and to speak face to face, that our joy  
13 may be made full. The children of  
thy elect sister salute thee.

the pen, made of a reed split. John breaks off from the mechanical means of communication because he hopes soon to see her. What he writes is of equal importance with what he speaks ; the Spirit may guide equally in both. **Our joy**, rather, *your*. Christian fellowship makes joy. (See 1:4.) Heaven, involving personal fellowship with Jesus and fellow-saints, is complete joy ; hell is joyless. For the present the believer may know Christ largely through the printed page and afar off ; he, in time, will see him face to face (1 John 3:2).

**13. Children.** It is implied that the mother is dead or absent, and that John is a guest in their house. There was in the early centuries a tender Christian fellowship arising from persecution, from sneers and scoffs, from misunderstandings, and from a common hope in the Saviour. The manifest love for each other was a sign of the Christian life (John 13:35). **Amen**, to be omitted.

**NOTE I. THE PROPER TREATMENT OF ERROR.** Elijah killed the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40). Paul affirmed the truth of his own teachings, putting the brand of condemnation upon all false teachers (Gal. 1:8). If any one alters the teachings of the Revelation it is said that a curse will rest upon him (Rev. 22:19). James and John forbade some persons from performing miracles in the name of Jesus because they were not openly identified with him (Luke 9:50, 51). Jesus reproved them saying, "He that is not against us is for us." In an age when there are many varying beliefs it becomes a question of importance to know what ought to be the attitude of the believer toward error. There must be kindness and love toward those in error, commanding the

truth in love. Bitterness of spirit awakens antagonism to the truth itself. Discrimination must be made between the fundamentals of the faith and the truths which are not of equal import. Even among the apostles there are varying aspects of the truth. In the New Testament writings one can readily distinguish between the views of the truth presented by Paul, Peter, and John. A person who is in doubt on important points of doctrine must be dealt with in a way different from the one who has reached definite conclusions. Jude presents different methods of dealing with men in different stages of error (*Jude 22, 23*). Persecution is never justifiable even for the most unscriptural teachings. The Baptists have always maintained that men are answerable to God for the truth of their beliefs. The teachings of revelation and the reason are to be employed to overcome error. We must distinguish between the teachings of the Bible and the interpretations of them held by men. The interpretations may be erroneous while the Bible teaching is accepted. The teaching of the trinity must be held as against unitarianism; salvation by faith in Christ must be held as against baptismal regeneration; the sufficiency of the Scriptures must be held as against the demands of rationalism; the equality of believers must be held as against the claims of a priesthood. Many doctrines in their main outlines are to be regarded as fixed and unchangeable. There must never be opposition to the truth that is contained in the erroneous teaching. There must not be an indiscriminate opposition. All errors derive their power from the truth contained in them. As against universalism, the tenderness and mercy of God must not be assailed; as against unitarianism the true humanity of Jesus must be conceded; as against spiritualism the existence of the soul after death must be recognized. Bigotry is the bitter holding of a part of the truth; indifferentism as to the truth is worse than bigotry. More danger is to be feared in this age from sentimentalism, a loose holding of the truth, than from persecution. There must be a desire to get to know all the truth of revelation; the truth when seen must be

loved, not surrendered or compromised; the truth must be borne witness to in all fitting ways. It requires great wisdom to hold the truth in love, to recognize truth wherever seen, to be a witness for the truth, to condemn all error, to think more of truth than of pleasing others.

**NOTE II. THE PLACE OF WOMAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES.** Woman fills a large place in the annals of the beginnings of Christianity. She is a recognized New Testament force. We find women among the personal friends and helpers of Jesus, adding to the comfort and efficiency of his life (*Luke 8 : 2, 3*). In the home at Bethany Jesus found a comforting and restful love. It was a woman, Mary, who perceived clearly the drift of his life toward death, when the minds of the disciples were blinded by their preconceived notions of the Messiah (*John 12 : 7*). Women were among the last at the cross and were the first at the sepulchre. It was a woman to whom the risen Saviour revealed himself. Women became thereby the first missionaries of the risen Christ. In Rom. 16 we have a luminous list of women who were effective helpers in the Christian activities of the first century. It was Phoebe, a deacon of the Cenchrean church, who was entrusted with the mission of carrying the letter to the Roman church (*Rom. 16 : 1*). It was Priscilla who became a theological teacher, giving instruction to the eloquent Apollos, bringing him into a larger light (*Acts 18 : 26*). Dorcas was the forerunner of many of the helpful agencies by which a sad and suffering world is made bearable (*Acts 9 : 36*). The four daughters of Philip were prophets, helping the believers by their appeals and counsels (*Acts 21 : 9*). Paul everywhere found coworkers among the Christian women. In Philippi the first convert in Europe was a woman who became thereby the first-fruits of that mighty movement that we know as European civilization. Two notable women were Paul's helpers at Philippi, Euodias and Syntyche (*Phil. 4 : 2*). One of the converts at Athens was a woman named Damaris. The chief women in the towns of Asia Minor became centers of a new in-

fluence that gave birth to churches and a Christian movement that in time controlled things (<sup>Acts 17:4</sup>). In this letter we have a glimpse of two Christian women and two Christian homes. The children of these homes were tributes to the efficiency of the home training. That the aged apostle should send a letter to a Christian woman, and that this letter should be preserved when some of Paul's writings have perished, is a proof of the position and recognized power of the Christian woman in the first century. Jesus Christ raised woman to a new height; and woman, in turn, gave Christianity a wonderful impulse in the world. Compare comments on 1 Cor. 14:35; Rom. 16:1; and 1 Tim. 3:11.

**NOTE 3. THE ERRORS OF THE FIRST CENTURY.** It is sometimes mistakenly thought that the first century was peculiarly free from errors in doctrine and looseness in life. It was, however, a hard struggle for the truth to maintain itself. The New Testament letters reveal a restless spirit and many perversions of the true teaching. The letter to the Romans reveals a dormant, spiritual life (<sup>Rom. 13:11</sup>). The letters to the Corinthians show a divided church, and a denial by some of the resurrection. The letter to the Galatians presents a widespread teaching denying the foundation thoughts of Christianity. The letter to the Colossians gives a glimpse of doctrines assaulting the nature of the person of Christ. The letter to the Hebrews is an exhortation not to go back to the imperfect teachings of Judaism. Every letter is a protest against false teaching and living; an appeal to correct thinking, to sound doctrine, to holy living. It is probable that no doctrinal error of recent years has arisen, that did not, in its essential features, spring up in the early centuries. The great modern errors are simply the old untruths under new forms. The study of church his-

tory is valuable in that it shows us how the early churches met and overcame false and perverted teachings.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. A good Christian character will win its way and command the respect of all. The best wealth of a church is the fine characters of its membership.

2. Peace can never come to the heart except through God's forgiveness. The world may get a peace through forgetfulness. Jesus alone bestows a peace that is restful, abiding, growing, holy (ver. 3).

3. To rejoice in the spiritual welfare of others is a mark of the Christian life. To try to make others fall is Satanlike. Every advance in the Redeemer's kingdom should awaken rejoicing. The angels rejoice when Jesus wins a lost man (ver. 4).

4. Mutual exhortation is helpful in the Christian life. It is commanded in Heb. 10:25. The membership in the church is almost a necessity for Christian living (ver. 5).

5. The love that God is pleased with is that which leads to the doing of God's will. The yoke of service is easy to wear when it is lined with love (ver. 6).

6. God does not raise up deceivers, but being raised up they become indirectly a blessing, in that they cause a renewed examination of questions in discussion, and insure a more intelligent defense of them. Attacks, in recent years, upon the trustworthiness of the biblical records have placed them on a firmer foundation (ver. 6).

7. To be a Christian is to have forgiveness, guidance, blessings here and hereafter, the presence of God himself. No one can know God, or possess God, except through Jesus Christ (ver. 9).

8. What a man believes and teaches is important. The beliefs of the heart will, in time, control the life (ver. 10).

### III. JOHN

1 THE elder unto the wellbeloved  
  <sup>a</sup>Gaius, <sup>b</sup>whom I love in the truth.  
2 Beloved, I wish above all things that  
  thou mayest prosper and be in health,  
3 even as thy soul prospereth. <sup>c</sup>For I

*a* Acts 19 : 29.

*b* 2 John 1.

*c* 2 John 4.

1 THE elder to Gaius the beloved,  
  whom I love in truth.  
2 Beloved, I pray that in all things  
  thou mayest prosper and be in health,  
3 as thy soul prospers. For I rejoiced

This letter, doubtless coincident with the second letter in order of time, resembles it in its general structure and style. All three letters revolve about the kindred thoughts of truth and love.

John addresses Gaius, one of the pillars of the church (ver. 1); he prays that he may be prospered in his spiritual life (ver. 2-4); praises him for his hospitality toward missionaries (ver. 5-8); notices the hostility of Diotrephes, a turbulent member (ver. 9, 10); mentions Demetrius as an illustration of the good element in the church (ver. 11, 12); and sends greeting to Gaius, whom he hopes to see soon (ver. 13, 14).

**I. 1. THE ADDRESS.** The author of this letter is the elder, the aged Apostle John. (See 2 John, ver. 1.) He modestly and invariably describes himself under some general or distinguishing description. (See John 1 : 35; 21 : 20.) In striking contrast to the claims made and the terms used by the modern popes and the bishops of Rome in the early centuries is the modest demeanor of Peter and John. **Gaius.** Three men of this name are mentioned in the New Testament by Paul (Acts 19 : 29; 20 : 4; Rom. 16 : 23; 1 Cor. 1 : 14). As all these men perhaps lived at an earlier age, it is probable that John refers to another bearing the same name. We are left in doubt as to the man referred to and as to the place of residence. It is not asserted in the address that he held an office in the church, but he was undoubtedly one of the pillars of the church. **In the truth,** rather, *in truth*, marks the sphere in which the love takes place; it is not a mere personal love, but a

love that springs from mutual indwelling in the truth of Christ; in other words a Christian love.

**II. 2-12. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LETTER.** The letter centers about three persons, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. There is a tribute to the character of Gaius, and praise for his hospitality to Christ's messengers.

**III. A prayer that Gaius may prosper in outward affairs as he does in his spiritual life (ver. 2-4).**

**2. I wish . . . prosper,** rather, *I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper.* This is an instance of intercessory prayer. **Health.** The reference is to bodily health, which is here made a subject of prayer. It may be that Gaius had been sick, as had been other servants of Christ. (See an instance of Paul, 2 Cor. 12 : 7; of Timothy, 1 Tim. 6 : 23; of Trophimus, 2 Tim. 4 : 20.) Gaius was a man spiritually minded, growing in grace, caring especially for the inner life. **Soul prospers.** It is a curse to a man when outward prosperity comes with an impoverished spiritual life. The soul is the standard of piety. Paul looked upon the inner man as the true man (2 Cor. 4 : 16). John's prayer is the reverse of that which is usually made, for generally the outward prosperity exceeds the growth of the soul in piety. A wealthy soul atones largely for a life girt about with infirmities and obstacles. Job is an example of incorruptible integrity in the midst of suffering.

**3. For gives the proof of the prosperous soul of Gaius.** John considers first his general faithfulness in Christian work, and in ver. 5 mentions the special cause of commendation. **Re-**

rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and

greatly, when brethren came and testified to thy truth, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

5 Beloved, thou doest a faithful work, in whatever thou doest to the brethren.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. 4 : 15; Gal. 4 : 19; Philem. 10.

**j**oiced, in the aorist tense, points out a definite time in the past when John heard of Gaius's life. **Brethren came** from Gaius's home and testified publicly to his Christian life. **Of the truth that is in thee**, rather, *unto thy truth*. The *truth*, the conformity to the life and teachings of Christ, was openly shown in his life. While errors were abounding, Gaius maintained an orthodox belief. His creed and his conduct were such as to awaken the praise of John. **Walkest** shows the constantly maintained Christian life. A man is responsible for his beliefs; they are his own. They both make him and he makes them. The two thoughts that control this letter are truth and love. John joins them indissolubly together.

4. This verse explains the "greatly rejoiced" of ver. 3. **I . . . truth**, rather, *Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth*. Gaius had, in all likelihood, been won to Christ through John's ministry, hence he calls him a child. In like manner Paul speaks of Timothy (2 Tim. 1 : 2). John was not simply a preacher leading men to Christ, but also a shepherd watching over them in their life and development. Paul expresses his grief over wayward disciples (Phil. 3 : 18). God's heart was cut with grief at beholding the wickedness of his creatures (Gen. 6 : 6). It is a mark of true piety, of the Christian man, of the good angel to rejoice in well-being and in well-doing. The Christian character of Gaius was the source of John's Christian joy. Paul counts the saved Thessalonian Christians his joy and crown at the last day (1 Thess. 2 : 9). Even Jesus finds his heaven more heavenly because his people are with him (John 17 : 24).

IV. 5-8. PRAISE OF GAIUS FOR HIS HOSPITALITY; SUCH HELPFULNESS BRINGS INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE TRUTH.

5. **Beloved** marks the introduction of a new thought. Four times in this short letter John uses the term (ver. 1, 2, 8, 11). In the presence of opposition and faction in the church his love grows deeper toward the faithful element in the church. **Doest** marks the constant tenor of his life; it was a character fixed in helpfulness. **Faithful** shows the conformity of the life to the commandment of love. It was a love not in word only, but revealed in deed, in life; a walk belonging only to those who belong to the class of faithful men (1 John 3 : 18). **Whatsoever** marks the entire range of the treatment of the Christian brother. A cup of cold water will not be forgotten (Matt. 10 : 42). Jesus makes use of the same expression in Matt. 26 : 10, rendered, "wrought a good work upon me." **To . . . strangers**, rather, *toward them that are brethren and strangers without*. The *brethren* here are those who came to them as *strangers*, from abroad. A hospitality to strangers was an exhibition of Christian love. (See Rom. 13 : 13; 1 Tim. 3 : 2; Titus 1 : 7; Heb. 13 : 2; 1 Peter 4 : 9.) Emphasis is laid in the New Testament upon the practical duty of hospitality in welcoming the traveling preacher. The absence of places of entertainment, the general poverty of the preachers, the new sense of a Christian brotherhood, made this a test of Christian love. The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," written about A. D. 100, speaks of the duty of giving a home to the traveling minister, but not for any length of time, lest the duty become burdensome. Jesus, in sending out the Twelve, bade them find a home with those who were found to be worthy (Matt. 10 : 11). Jesus sometimes found no open door for himself on his journeys (Luke 9 : 53). Christianity obtained its hold in the first century through men who went out in the manner here described, sometimes driven out by persecution (Acts 8 : 4);

6 to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt 7 do well: because that <sup>c</sup> for his name's sake they went forth, <sup>d</sup> taking nothing 8 of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

e 2 Cor. 4:5.

6 ren, and that to strangers, who testified to thy love before the church; whom thou wilt do well to send forward on 7 their journey worthily of God; for on behalf of the NAME they went forth, 8 taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to sustain such persons, that we may become fellowworkers for the truth.

f 1 Cor. 9:12, 15.

sometimes impelled by an irrepressible desire to save men.

6. The evangelists gave an account of their journeys and triumphs before the assembled church, where John was at this time living. **Which . . . charity**, rather, *who bare witness to thy love*. In like manner Paul and Barnabas gave an account of their missionary journey before the church at Antioch (Acts 14:27). From a praise of the past John turns to the future, urging them to a like conduct when the evangelist should return to his community. **Whom . . . well**, rather, *whom thou wilt do well to send forward on their journey worthily of God*. The evangelists were engaged in God's service, they were worthy therefore of highest commendation. To help them was, in reality, to help God in his work upon the earth. In like manner Jesus speaks of the reception that ought to be accorded to his messengers (Matt. 10:40). Jesus regards kindness shown toward his disciples as displayed toward himself (Acts 9:4; Matt. 25:40). Hospitality when exercised with the right motive becomes a godlike act.

7. This verse shows the high calling of the work of the evangelists. **For his name's sake**, rather, *for the sake of the name*. The name stands for the unseen person, by whose command and moved by whose love they went out, here meaning the name of Christ. James speaks of the name of the Lord (5:14), meaning Jesus. To the first-century Christians there was no dividing line as to the divine nature between Jesus and God; Jesus was to them the manifested God (John 1:14). In a natural manner John passes from the thought of God, meaning the Father, to Jesus, the Son of God, the head of the church, in whose interests these men went out. (See Col. 1:18.) They went forth from the church into the world, not to deceive, as the antichrists (1 John

2:19). **Taking nothing from the Gentiles**. Their sphere of labor was evangelizing, giving the good news to the heathen, those outside the Jewish and Christian faith. To prevent misconceptions of Christianity, that their mission might not be regarded as mercenary, they took nothing. The words in the Greek imply that this was their deliberate purpose. Paul preached in a like manner, refusing to take pay from the newly formed churches (1 Cor. 9:18; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:9). Jesus commanded a like course in Matt. 10:8. On the other hand, Paul insists on his right and the right of the ministry to a maintenance from the churches when established (1 Cor. 9:14; Heb. 13:16). A first duty among the missionaries to-day is the work of bringing the native churches to a self-support. For the extent of correspondence and travel in the first century, consult the chapter in Ramsay's "Letters to the Seven Churches," entitled "Writing, Travel, and Letters among the Early Christians."

8. This verse reveals the duty of the Christian to the evangelist. It is a matter of duty to **receive**, rather, *welcome*, such persons. Their reception must be anticipated and provided for by the Christian, not sought by the missionary as if soliciting alms. **Fellow helpers to the truth**, rather, according to the best text, *fellow-workers for the truth*. Those contributing of their means or their hospitality become participants in the work of the spiritual conquest of the world. Each Christian, by virtue of his Christian life, must be engaged in the missionary enterprise. Jesus Christ was a missionary; Christianity is essentially a missionary religion, it can live and grow and keep pure only by spreading it. Each believer must go or send. There is, in reality, no dividing line between the secular and the sacred;

9 I wrote unto the church : but Diotrephe, & who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words. And not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that

9 I wrote somewhat to the church ; but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, receives us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his deeds which he does, prating against us with evil words. And not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and those who wish to do so,

*g Matt. 23 : 8; Mark 10 : 44.*

material things given for Christ, hospitality toward the unknown workers, are essentially spiritual acts. In the original there is a play upon the words ; the missionaries take nothing from the Gentiles, therefore we ought to take them up and help them. This verse gives the spirit and method of giving and working—not to please others, but to help the cause of Christ. Each one so participating becomes a partner with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit in the great work of saving the world. Helpfulness is a duty and a privilege.

V. 9, 10. THE HOSTILITY OF DIOTREPHESES. The early churches were made up of imperfect men. All the letters of the New Testament reveal the mixed character of the membership. There were quarrels among the members (*Phil. 4 : 2*) ; factions in the church (*1 Cor. 1 : 11*) ; doctrinal errors (*1 Cor. 15 : 12*) ; defections on the part of teachers (*1 Tim. 1 : 20*) ; a sluggish religious life (*Heb. 5 : 12*). Even the supervision of the apostles did not keep out impurities.

9. John, though an apostle, did not have the support and help of all the members of the church. Paul also found a turbulent opposition, disputing his authority (*2 Cor. 4 : 10*). John had written a previous letter to the church on this same subject doubtless, the welcoming of the traveling preachers. **I wrote**, rather, *I wrote somewhat*; not asserting that it was important or unimportant, but simply stating the fact of writing. This letter had been withheld, perhaps destroyed, by Diotrephes. In like manner, at least, one of Paul's letters disappeared (*1 Cor. 5 : 9*). It is a possibility that some of the lost letters of apostolic times may yet be recovered. The letter was sent to the church, not as here to a person, of which both Gaius and Diotrephes were members. Diotrephes gained nothing

by destroying the letter, for we have in this letter, doubtless, a repetition of its contents, with the added characterization of Diotrephes himself. **Diotrephe**s. We know nothing of him except from this allusion. He was, perhaps, one of the pastors of the church, having gotten the church largely under his influence. In the same church, supporting the authority of John, were Demetrius (*ver. 12*) and Gaius. Diotrephes rejected the authority of John, and refused to receive the messengers. He may have been a Judaizer (*Gal. 2 : 4*) who did not sympathize with the work among the Gentiles, or it may have been simply the desire to have the preeminence that ruled him. He was a small-sized pope in the church. The New Testament church was democratic in its form of government, according to which the majority had the power of control. See *1 Cor. 5 : 4*; *2 Cor. 2 : 6*, where "many" should be rendered *the many* or *the more*. Such a form of government always gives opportunity for a popular bad man to get an undue control; but this is one of the perils to which every good institution is exposed.

10. Here is shown the attitude of John toward Diotrephes. See Paul's words to the factious element of the Corinthian church (*2 Cor. 10*). **Wherefore**, rather, *therefore*. **If I come** refers to some intended journey of the apostle, of which he doubtless made many among the churches of Asia Minor from Ephesus as a center. **Will remember**, rather, *will bring to remembrance*. John would lay before the church the works of Diotrephes, not known perhaps to all, and not realized in their full enormity. He had spoken publicly against the apostle, **prating with malicious words**, rather, *wicked*, implying that the assertions of Diotrephes were of an un-

- would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved, <sup>b</sup> follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. <sup>i</sup> He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.
- 12** Demetrius <sup>k</sup> hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; <sup>l</sup> and ye know that our record is true.

- he forbids, and casts them out of the church.
- 11** Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He that does good, is of God; he that does evil, has not seen God.
- 12** To Demetrius, testimony has been borne by all, and by the truth itself; yea, we also testify, and thou knowest that our testimony is true.

<sup>a</sup> Exod. 23:2; Ps. 37:27; Isa. 1:16, 17; 1 Peter 3:10-13.      <sup>f</sup> 1 John 2:29; 3:6-9.  
<sup>k</sup> 1 Tim. 3:7.      <sup>l</sup> John 21:24.

worthy sort. **Casteth.** Through his influence by a formal vote they were put outside the pale of the church, suffering loss in business and social standing thereby. There was a legitimate exclusion from the church for unworthy conduct (1 Cor. 5:5); here the exclusion was for adherence to the truth. John Huss, tied to the stake, covered with a robe on which were pictures of demons, a martyr for his love of the truth, said, "I appeal from your unjust judgment to the judgment seat of Christ." Jesus sought out one excommunicated for his sake (John 9:35); in like manner John here approves the action of the excluded members. One, Diotrephes, wealthy, intellectual, with high social standing, with a repute for piety, may suffice to ruin a church, may prove stronger, for a time, than the truth of Christ and the authority of the apostles even.

**VI. 11, 12. FELLOWSHIP MUST BE HAD WITH THE GOOD; OF THIS DEMETRIUS IS AN EXAMPLE.**

**11.** John goes back from specific examples to the large controlling principles of the life, of which he sees only two possible, the good, the evil. He affirms of Diotrephes, because his actions are evil, that he has not seen God. John goes back from men and their individual lives to their sources; to God who makes and maintains goodness; to Satan who makes evil in the heart. This verse is a reminiscence of 1 John 3:6. Diotrephes would lose his hold upon the deluded good members of the church if they could see his character in its true light. Through Gaius the opinion of John would probably be made known to the church to some extent.

**12.** The bad to be avoided finds illustration in Diotrephes, the good to be imitated finds expression in Deme-

trius, who is at the opposite remove from Diotrephes. **Good report,** rather, *witness*. The same persons who brought an ill-report of Diotrephes, brought also a good report of Demetrius. A threefold testimony is borne concerning him; first, those who know him; secondly, **of the truth itself.** This means that his conformity to the truth of the gospel, to Jesus Christ, who is the truth, is so apparent that it is as though the truth itself bears witness to him. Thirdly, **we . . . record**, rather, *we also bear witness*. It was of great importance for the sake of the truth in this community, and for the support of Demetrius in his struggle for right doctrine and for rightful government that Demetrius should be strongly supported, hence John adds his own apostolic authority. **Ye . . . true**, rather, *thou knowest that our witness is true*. The weight of John's personal character and his apostolic authority would have great influence with Gaius and the right-thinking part of the membership. John was not a mild-thinking man, destitute of force of character, when the truth was at stake. He was a sturdy antagonist for the truth, and for good men in standing by the truth. Every age needs its Demetrius and its Gaius in the contests that arise for maintaining a correct mold of doctrine and a right administration of Christ's authority upon the earth. All good men should stand openly for the truth, in its advocacy and for its supremacy. What was the result of this admonition, whether the church was saved, whether John's authority was resisted, whether Diotrephes himself was excluded or won to the truth, these questions cannot be answered. Self-will will ruin a church. Heresy, in its primary import, means a division in

13 "I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto 14 thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.

Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

13 I had many things to write to thee, but I wish not to write to thee with 14 ink and pen; but I hope straightway to see thee, and we shall speak face to face.

Peace be to thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.

*m 2 John 12.*

the church. Factiousness and wrong teaching are both enemies of the welfare and existence of the church.

#### VII. 13, 14. CLOSE OF THE LETTER.

**13. Many things** concerning their personal relations, concerning the teachings of revelation, concerning the welfare of the church pressed upon him while writing, but the circumstances of the case were too urgent for delay. **Write**, rather, *write unto thee*. The less occasion was there for him to write much because he hoped soon to see him. **I will not**, rather, *I am unwilling*. **Ink and pen**. (See 2 John 12.)

**14. But** introduces, on the other hand, the proposal of a speedy visit. **I trust . . . thee**, rather, *I hope shortly to see thee*. There will then be the unrestrained fellowship of Christian hearts and mutual converse. Nearness to a common Christ makes nearness to each other. Heaven will be such personal fellowship entirely purified and perpetuated. **Peace**. This is the only instance in the New Testament of this personal formula. Jesus with this term greeted his disciples (*John 20:19*). **Our . . . thee**, rather, *the friends salute thee*. This is the only New Testament instance of the Christian brethren being called friends. **Salute**. The Christian salutation would be the holy kiss, a method of greeting yet preserved in the East (*Rom. 16:16*). The church as a social organization, a family in Christ, must have the social spirit. Even Paul was cheered by the presence of a few friends with bright words and faces (*Acts 28:15*). John had the names of many of the brethren in his mind, as Paul also carried in his memory the names of many faithful men and women. (See *Rom. 16*.) Jesus knows the names of all his followers (*John 10:3*). The personal character of this letter addressed to a person, not to a church, explains the use of the term **friends**, rather than the more formal term of brothers. Jesus himself had hallowed this term friend in *John 15:1*.

15. Such a letter received by a person or by the church would be placed among the archives of the church as a part of its treasures; would be read before the church (see *1 Thess. 5:27*); would be copied and sent to other churches. (See *Col. 4:16*.) In this way, little by little, the writings of the New Testament were gathered together and formed one collection.

**NOTE I. THE CHURCH LIFE AS REVEALED IN THESE LETTERS.** In these letters we see a membership nominally Christian, but with much of an unchristian spirit. This is true of all the churches to which Paul sent his letters. (See the letters to the churches at Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica.) That a spiritual regeneration was insisted upon as a prerequisite for membership is evident from the expressed teaching everywhere in the New Testament. (See *Acts 2:47*.) But the church life, as manifest in the first century, is very imperfect. There was in the churches, as a rule, a plurality of elders. (See *Titus 1:4*.) There was also a democratic church government, in which the majority could receive or exclude a member. (See *2 Cor. 2:6*.) This power could be used to keep in the unworthy member (*1 Cor. 5:2*), or drive out the worthy, as in *3 John 9*. A regenerate church needs the spirit and wisdom of Christ in order that unity may be preserved and Christ's kingdom advanced. Diotrephes, Demetrius, and Gaius may all have been elders in the church to which John had written. The church had its own independent life, it was a complete church in itself. The church, as embracing all the believers in a district, had not yet arisen. The church life and procedure were very simple, though the domineering spirit of Diotrephes was of precisely that kind which gives birth to the papacy with its grasping power.

In the "Teaching of the Twelve

Apostles" are the following words which illustrate the meaning of ver. 7: "Let every apostle who cometh to you be received as the Lord. He shall not overstay one day, though if need be, the next; but if he remain three days he is a false prophet. And let not the apostle on departing take aught save bread till he come to a stopping-place; and if he take money he is a false prophet. And whoso saith, in the Spirit, give me moneys or other things, you shall not hearken to him." The term, apostle, as used here, does not refer to the Twelve, but to any one sent out by the church. Those scattered by persecution became missionaries, spreading the word (<sup>Acts</sup> 11:19). It was in this way, through personal and church activity, that Christianity won its way in the first centuries through the entire Roman empire.

**NOTE II. JOHN'S USE OF THE TERM, TRUTH.** John alone presents Jesus Christ as himself the absolute truth (John 14:6). He uses this term five times in 2 John, and six times in this letter, two private letters. Bishop Alexander notes the varying significations in which John makes use of the term.

1. Truth as objectively presented.  
1. As living and embodied in the Son (John 14:6).

2. As living and embodied in the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:7).

3. As embodied in the sum total of the revelation of Jesus, the absolute truth (John 1:17; 8:32, 40; 16:13; 17:17).

II. The truth received by us into the heart and life becomes, subjectively, the truth in us (1 John 1:8; 2:4; 2 John 2; 3 John 3).

1. Truth in thought (1 John 2:21; 2 John 1).

2. Truth in action (1 John 1:6).  
3. Truth in speech (John 8:45, 46).

4. Truth in actuality; the fact as opposed to that which is seeming (1 John 3:18; 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

The Christian, looked upon in the ideal way, must be truthful in word, must correspond in thought and char-

acter with Jesus Christ, the absolute truth, must be real in nature, not a mere seeming, or hypocrisy. As the Christian grows into the likeness to Christ there will be a growing purity in thought, in conduct, and in doctrine. John insists upon a correctness in doctrine as well as a correctness in life. A falsity in one will naturally, in time, beget a falsity in the other.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The only thing about a man that deserves and commands the respect of others, in the long run, is personal character (ver. 1).

2. It indicates a high state of piety when, to express our highest wishes for friends, we hope that they may be as much prospered in outward affairs as they are in their inner life. Outward prosperity ought always to promote piety; frequently it hinders it and makes the life material (ver. 2).

3. The great desire of Jesus for his disciples was that they might be kept from evil (John 17:15). The great joy of John's heart was that a man was living in conformity with God's will (ver. 3).

4. The ingratitude of a child is sharper than a serpent's tooth; the beautiful life of a child brings gladness to the parent, the Christian teacher, the heart of Jesus (ver. 4).

5. Jesus sometimes needed a home when on his missionary journeys (Luke 9:54). It is a mark of the Christian to be hospitable toward all who are trying to be helpful to Christ (ver. 5; Acts 28:15).

6. It is possible to do a thing, very small in itself, in a very worthy way (ver. 6).

7. The New Testament order is, first Christ, then the church; Christ saves, the church helps (ver. 9).

8. To do wrong is a wicked thing; to lead others to do wrong, to hinder other people, is a more wicked thing. Diotrephe was a hinderer, a stumbling-block in the way of others. It is more natural to hinder than to help (ver. 10).

# JUDE

**I** \*JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and <sup>b</sup>brother of James, <sup>c</sup>to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and <sup>d</sup>preserved in Jesus Christ, and <sup>e</sup>called:

*a* Matt. 10:3.

*b* Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13.

*c* John 17:17, 19.

*d* John 17:11, 12, 15; 1 Peter 1:5.

*e* Rom. 8:30.

## 1, 2. SALUTATION AND PRAYER.

1. The author of this letter is **Jude**, rather, *Judas*. The form is shortened in the Received version, perhaps to distinguish him from Judas the apostate. This *Judas* is the same as the brother of our Lord. (See Introduction.) He does not give himself any official designation, but describes himself as a **servant**, meaning a bond slave, of Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of himself in the same manner (*Titus 1:1*). Alford thinks that this term has reference to those who were especially engaged in his service in spreading the gospel. **Brother of James.** The *James* here mentioned is a man of larger prominence in the church than Judas himself. He was not an apostle, but one who, by his relationship to Jesus, his position as pastor of the mother church, his character of marked piety, being known as James the Just, was a man of commanding influence and power in the first century. It would be unfitting to claim relationship with the glorified Christ, inasmuch as all would feel that the ties which bound him to an earthly Christ would all be sundered by Christ's ascension and glorification. (See Matt. 12:49.) The brothers of Jesus, including Judas and James, did not at first accept the Messiahship of Jesus; it was only by the stupendous fact of the resurrection that they were won (*John 7:5*). Judas would naturally appeal to the superior authority of James, because he wrote mainly for the same persons to whom James wrote, that is, Jewish Christians. **To . . . called**, rather, *To them that*

**I** JUDE, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for

*are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.* The readers are defined in three ways, *called, beloved, kept*. *Called* has a general New Testament meaning of, not invitation merely, but of the acceptance of God's grace. He writes to them as bearing not merely the name of Christians, but as having Christian character, having come into the knowledge of the Saviour. In Matt. 20:16 "called" stands in contrast with *elect, chosen*. In other places, especially in Paul's writings, it stands as the result of a predetermined choice of God. *Beloved.* The readers are bound to Judas, not by ties of earthly kinship or personal relationship, but from having a common relation to God they are all children of God. Having come into a new life through the Holy Spirit, having been adopted into the spiritual household of God, being sons and daughters in reality, they love each other. The term *Father* implies sons and daughters, and the family life and love. **Preserved in, or, kept for, Jesus Christ.** The tense of the participle implies a completed act, that continues in its results. This is a favorite term in the later writings of the New Testament. Peter uses it five times, John eight times in 1 John, Judas four times in this letter (ver. 1, 6, 21, 24). The keeping power implied is that of God alluded to in John 17:15. The time to which Judas refers is that of the appearance of Jesus, the day of his coming. Christ's people were redeemed by himself, created anew through the Holy Spirit, guarded

**2** Mercy unto you, and <sup>f</sup> peace, and love, be multiplied.

**3** Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you <sup>g</sup>of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that <sup>h</sup>ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the

**2** Jesus Christ: Mercy, and peace, and love, be multiplied to you.

**3** Beloved, while giving all diligence to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith delivered once for

<sup>f</sup> 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2.

<sup>g</sup> Titus 1:4.

<sup>h</sup> Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:13.

by God; they are finally presented to himself as his own (Eph. 5:27). The entire Godhead is concerned in the saving and keeping of the believer.

**2.** In 1 and 2 Timothy we have grace, mercy, peace. In 1 and 2 Peter we have grace and peace. Judas gives **mercy, peace, love.** *Mercy* expresses God's feelings toward them as sinners, his compassion; *peace* is the result in the heart, of God's mercy, of a reconciliation effected; *love* may refer to their love for each other or to God's love for them. It is used in the latter sense in ver. 21 and in 2 Cor. 13:14. **Multiplied.** The Christian life should be an always enlarging life, it should not be largest at the first. The Christian infancy should grow into a Christian maturity. If the Christian life is not cultivated, it may become a dwindling life (Heb. 5:11).

**3, 4. DESIGN OF THE LETTER; REASONS FOR WRITING.**

**3. Beloved** indicates a reason for writing, and tends to mitigate the severity of the terms afterward used. **When . . . diligence**, rather, *while I was giving all diligence.* The expression *diligence* reveals an intensive desire on the part of Judas. **Common salvation.** Compare a similar expression in Titus 1:14, "common faith." It is implied that he was about to write, or was actually writing to them concerning the fact of a common salvation, the great truths of the gospel, the heritage of all believers. **It was needful**, rather, *I was constrained.* The reason for the change of purpose is found in the next verse. There is a change here in the tense of the verb, being in the present tense in the first part, indicating a general purpose, changing now to the aorist, pointing to an immediate and special act. The letters of the New Testament sprang from emergencies and needs calling them into existence. **Contend.** Something of the same figure

is emphasized in Phil. 1:27, "striving together for the faith." It is an appeal to fight for, to defend, to stand over, the truth committed to them. The contending for the truth must always be in love. Nothing is more unseemly than a bitter spirit displayed in behalf of Christ's teachings. **Faith.** This does not refer to faith as that personal dependence upon Christ that brings salvation, but to the substance of the things believed by them, the gospel of Christ. Faith is used in the objective sense. The passage in 1 Tim. 3:16 and the five faithful sayings of Paul found in 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:21; Titus 3:11 may be pictures of the first teachings given to believers, portions of the creeds of the first century that have come down to us. See reference to the same common belief entrusted to them to be cared for in 2 Tim. 1:13, 14. **Once delivered,** rather, *once for all delivered.* This refers to the completeness and unchangeableness of the truths given to them. Jesus did not reveal all his teachings to his disciples during his earthly ministry (John 10:12). There is an enlarging knowledge of the New Testament, of the doctrines and their relations to each other. It has been reserved to each period of church history to bring out some one doctrine into a greater distinctness. Augustine brought out the doctrine of human sinfulness, the council of Nicaea affirmed clearly the divinity of Jesus as Son of God; the Reformation emphasized the teaching of justification by faith. The present century has developed the doctrines of the person of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no limit to the development of the truth, but no additions have been made or can be made to that which we have given to us through Jesus and the inspired writers. The mass, the doctrines of purgatory, the celibacy of the clergy, prayers for the dead, infant baptism,

**4** saints. **1**For there are certain men crept in unawares, **k** who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **l**turning the grace of

**4** all to the saints. For there crept in stealthily some men, who of old were set forth beforehand to this condemnation, ungodly men, changing the grace

*i Gal. 2:4; 2 Peter 2:1.*

*k Rom. 9:21 22.*

*l Rom. 6:1; Gal. 5:13; 2 Peter 2:10.*

aspersion for baptism, the priesthood as a sacerdotal order—all these, not being contained in the New Testament, explicitly or by implication, have no warrant for their existence. Traditions and customs, however widely practised and held, have no power as against the New Testament teaching. Errors of doctrine, heresies, corruptions in teaching and life, call for a defense of the faith. (See Gal. 1:9.) It is noticeable that the appeal here is sent to all Christians to be zealous for the truth, inasmuch as to them had been committed the complete and unchanging facts of the gospel.

**4.** We have here the occasion for the letter. **Certain men.** There is a tone of depreciation and contempt in these words, as for men unknown and insignificant in themselves. But they created a great peril to the purity of the church, inasmuch as they belonged to that large class of teachers who were introducing licentiousness under the garb of religion. **Crept in unawares,** rather, *privily*. Paul speaks in the same way in Gal. 2:4: “false brethren privily brought in.” Judas condemns the secrecy, the false methods employed in their introduction into the church. These teachers were members of the church; but it is asserted that there had been in them, at their introduction into the church, opinions and purposes so at variance with Christian teachings that they ought never to have come in. Even the apostles did not have the power to read the heart in the reception of members. (See Acts 6:1, 2.) They came in to introduce a heathen license in the matter of teachings and morals. **Who . . . condemnation,** rather, *even they who were of old set forth unto the condemnation.* We must not understand this of any predestination to this end, the allusion is rather to the description of the men in the Old Testament prophecies, and the utterances of the New Testament teachers. The word rendered **ordained** occurs five times in the New Testament—Rom. 15:

4 twice, Gal. 3:1, Eph. 3:3, and this passage, and is twice rendered “written before.” The reference here must be to some fact in time, not to any divine purpose in eternity. The presence of these teachers and their falsities ought not to surprise them, for their origin and method had been portrayed beforehand. The term rendered **of old**, sometimes refers to things of recent event (see Mark 15:44; 2 Peter 1:9), whereas the references to an eternal past are designated by different terms. (See Eph. 1:4; Acts 15:18.) The historical events mentioned subsequently in this letter may be regarded as prophetic warnings. The Old Testament prophetic writings, the apocryphal literature of the times, and the prophecies of Enoch alluded to in ver. 14, may be regarded as definite sources of prediction. To be forewarned as to doctrinal errors is to be armed against them. **Condemnation.** He refers here to the judgment passed upon them in this letter. (See ver. 11.) **Ungodly.** They are impious in character, as is shown in the following statement. **Turning . . . lasciviousness.** Whether as teachers or members they asserted that Christians were free to live lives of sensuality. Having been called to a freedom in Christ they assumed to make this freedom an occasion to the flesh (Gal. 6:13). This licentiousness may have arisen from either of two sources. It may have sprung from a distorted and false notion of the position of Christians, that they were free from the restraints of the law so that what would be sin for others would not be sin for them. Or it may have come from the philosophic system called gnosticism, according to which all matter is evil in nature, that the soul is too pure to be corrupted, and the body too impure to be capable of pollution. Therefore the professing child of God might plunge into all excesses without peril, might do anything whereby the soul might gain knowledge. Paul teaches that the believer is freed from condemnation, but thereby becomes a bondman

our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**5** I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that <sup>a</sup> the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, after-

of our God into wantonness, and denying the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**5** But I wish to remind you, though ye know all things once for all, that Jesus,<sup>1</sup> having saved the people out of

<sup>m</sup> Titus 1: 16; <sup>2</sup> Peter 2: 1; <sup>1</sup> John 2: 22.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. 10: 1-12.

<sup>1</sup> Or, the Lord.

to Christ (*Rom. 6: 14-23*). The spirit of licentiousness, under the garb of piety, was everywhere prevalent, and was combated by the apostles. See Paul's teachings on this subject in *1 Cor. 6: 9, 18*; *Rom. 6: 1*; also Peter's teachings in *2 Peter 2*; also John's teachings in *1 John 3: 7-10*. **Denying . . . Christ, rather, denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** The best MSS omit the term, **God**. The terms rendered **Lord** twice in the Received version differ in the Greek; the differences are shown in the Revised version. Both terms are to be applied to Christ, though Alford contends that we must refer **Master** to God, inasmuch as the constant usage of the New Testament, except in *2 Peter 2: 1*, favors this. That Jesus Christ was regarded as divine by the New Testament writers is evident from the manner in which they everywhere speak of him. If both these terms apply to Jesus, then he is looked upon as God. If only the latter term may be applied to Christ, then it is evident, from the close association of Christ with God, that he is regarded as one far beyond any mere human being. It is possible that the use of the term **our**, as applied to God and to Christ, implies that there was a wide divergence between these men and the true believers; God and Christ did not belong to them, but to the believers only. The denial spoken of may refer to a denial of the reality of the incarnation (*1 John 2: 22, 23*), or to a denial of the supremacy of Christ, or to a virtual but real denial of Christ by an unchristly life. When a creed speaks in an orthodox way in one direction, and an ungodly life speaks in another direction, the life outweighs the creed.

**5-7. EXAMPLES OF GOD'S PUNITIVE JUSTICE.** Judas turns now to the Old Testament that he may present instances of God's justice in punishing the ungodly, the impious, the licentious. These examples, revealing God's essentially holy nature, are in them-

selves prophecies of what will come to the false members and teachers of his day. They will serve as warnings to the ungodly, and as encouragements to the faithful part of the church. Three examples are given.

**5.** (First example, the judgment upon unbelieving Israel.) **I . . . re-membrance, rather, now I desire to put you in remembrance.** It is implied that the readers were already instructed in the faith once delivered to the saints, and needed to be reminded only of their previous knowledge. (*Comp. 2 Peter 3: 1*.) Intellectual knowledge alone will not purify the life, it needs to be kindled with a moral enthusiasm. **Once knew this,** rather, **knew all things once for all.** Compare a similar expression in *1 John 3: 20*. The expression must be limited to that of which Judas is speaking—the essential elements of the faith under consideration. No large knowledge akin to omniscience, or a knowledge on general subjects, or a knowledge imparted to them apart from their intellectual and moral standing, is or can be thought of. There may be here a tacit rebuke to the large claims made by the false teachers that they had certain important teachings which the believers did not have, but had come to them through special revelations. **Lord.** The MSS here have varying readings, some giving **Lord**, some **Jesus**, some **God**. Alford and the Cambridge Bible prefer **Jesus** as the best supported, corresponding to the use of Christ in *1 Cor. 10: 4* as applied to Old Testament history. The Revised version gives "Lord," in which case the allusion is rather to God the Father. It seems scarcely possible that the name Jesus, the human title of Christ, would be applied to an incident of the Old Testament history. On internal grounds this would decide the question that whatever reading the MSS may give, the name Jesus cannot be adopted. **Saved the people,** rather, **a people**, allud-

ward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto

the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who believed not. And angels who kept not their principality, but left their own habitation, he has kept in everlasting bonds under darkness,

*o Heb. 8 : 17-19, 4 : 1, 2.*

*p 2 Peter 2 : 4; Rev. 20 : 10.*

ing to his own people, the nation of Israel. He saved his own people by delivering them from Pharaoh, by the passage through the Red Sea, and by all the events that accompanied their deliverance. **Afterward destroyed.** This is to be understood of the destruction of the same people in the wilderness. It embraces the catastrophe in the matter of Korah (*Num. 16 : 49*), that of Baal-peor (*Num. 25*), and the general wasting away of the people, so that the rebellious and unbelieving fell as carcases in the wilderness. (*See Heb. 8 : 12-19.*) We may not refer the *afterward* to the captivity in Babylon or to the destruction of Jerusalem. The gross disobedience brought a speedy punishment; it may be inferred that God will now speedily interfere on behalf of righteousness and truth. Two divine acts are here mentioned: one act of mercy—the saving his people, and one act of judgment—the subsequent destruction of the same people. There is manifest in this the unchangeably holy nature of God; he acts not according to favoritism, but according to character. God's justice is conclusively shown in that the retribution fell upon them that believed not. In Judas' day the same moral discrimination would be shown. No deliverance would come to the ungodly, even if they were numbered among the congregation of the righteous. In the corresponding passage in Peter the destruction by the flood is made use of to illustrate the same principle. (*See 2 Peter 2.*)

**6.** (A second example, the destruction of the disobedient angels.) The author now selects an instance from the unseen world, and from beings higher in order than men. This passage is common to Peter (*2 Peter 2*). **And . . . habitation**, rather, *and angels who kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation.* For **first estate** we have the preferable reading *principality*, in harmony with its rendering elsewhere (*Rom. 8 : 34; Eph. 8 : 10; 6 : 12; Col. 1 : 16; 2 :*

*10, 15*). The reference is to their original investiture as rulers under God, having a high and noble rule; but they left their proper office, power, and relation to God. **Own habitation.** It was theirs by creation, through God's appointment; this they left for a habitation not their own, not made for them. They left a habitation of light, they formed a kingdom, a power of darkness (*Col. 1 : 13*). This is the sin they committed, leaving their original condition, rebelling thereby against God. How many there were when the sin was committed, in what the sin consisted—these questions have been much discussed. But they must ever remain unanswered questions. It has been assumed by many that the sin spoken of is the same that is mentioned in *Gen. 6 : 2, 4*. But against that view are these considerations: The sons of God there mentioned were not angels, but the descendants of Seth, who intermarried with the children of Cain, and it is impossible to conceive of angels committing fleshly sins—sins that cannot be reconciled with the Saviour's teachings concerning the nature of angels (*Matt. 22 : 30*). The book of Enoch declares that the angels sinned through their sensual nature. The sin spoken of in the next verse is one of sensuality; it is not probable, therefore, that the sin here mentioned would be of the same character. The passage here refers to the original rebellion of the angels, their fall from being heavenly powers to becoming spirits of evil and darkness. **Reserved**, rather, *kept*. We cannot escape noticing the play upon the words used; the angels kept not their own principality, therefore they were kept under **everlasting chains under darkness**, rather, *bonds*. **Darkness** is conceived of as holding sway over them as a ruler. They are held in captivity by their bonds. The same thought is expressed in *2 Peter. Judgment . . . day*. There is a perpetual passing of God's judgments

**7** the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

**8** Likewise also these filthy dreamers

7 to the judgment of the great day. As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner with these giving themselves over to fornication, and going away after other flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the 8 vengeance of eternal fire. Yet, in like manner, these also in their dreaming

*q Gen. 19:24; Deut. 29:23; 2 Peter 2:6.*

*r Jer. 23:25-28; 2 Peter 2:10.*

upon men, but there remains a final and formal day of trial at the end of this era. This is spoken of by Jesus (Matt. 13:40), by Paul (Acts 17:31), by John (1 John 4:17). There is a conscious self-condemnation which is a partial penalty now; but neither for believer nor for the finally impenitent is there a full recompense until the last day. Paul alludes to a judgment to be passed on angels (1 Cor. 6:3). The apocryphal book of Enoch dwells much on the punishment of the angels.

**7.** (A third example of judgment upon heathen cities.) For a similar account see 2 Peter 2:6. We have had one instance of God's retributive power, the punishment of the chosen people; a second instance of penalty in the unseen spiritual world. We now have an instance in the outside world, the penalty that came upon the heathen cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These two cities stand out preeminently as examples of unbridled lust, of animalism, as cities that invented new and monstrous sins. They remain as bywords of reproach and infamy. **The cities . . . themselves,** rather, *the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves.* To what does *these* refer, to the angels, to Sodom and Gomorrah, or to the false teachers and members? Alford and Farrar maintain that the reference is to the angels, but their view is bound up with the unfounded notion that the angels, spiritual in their nature, committed fornication with the daughters of men. The reference is to Sodom and Gomorrah, which not only themselves, but the towns also that were corrupted by them, suffered God's retribution. **Strange flesh.** There were abominable sins committed among the heathen. See Lev. 18:22-25; Rom. 1:27, and the many references in classic writers on the special and unnatural sins practised even in the days of the Greek and Roman

civilizations. It is said that the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:19) were guilty of the sins of Sodom. In the poems of Cadmon and in Milton's "Paradise Lost," pride chiefly was looked upon as the sin of the angels, not sensuality. **Set forth . . . eternal fire,** rather, *set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.* This may refer either to the cities which, destroyed by fire, are yet looked upon as suffering an everlasting punishment, inasmuch as they have not been rebuilt, or it may refer to the people of these cities, whose destruction is typified by the fate of the cities themselves, who are regarded as suffering the just punishment of their sins. The latter view is the better. Jesus speaks of Nineveh as rising in the judgment, in which case the reference is exclusively to the people of that city (Matt. 12:41). There is an eternal punishment spoken of by Jesus (Matt. 25:46), by Paul (2 Thess. 1:9). Both the angels and the Sodomites are regarded as under punishment now. The unbelieving Jews, sinning in their unbelief, the angels sinning through their pride, the cities of the plain sinning through their sensual appetites perished irrevocably under the operation of God's holy laws. These several instances of punishment might well, therefore, serve for warnings to the ungodly men of Judas' day.

**8-19. THE UNGODLY MEN FULLY DESCRIBED.** There is no part of the New Testament, excepting Matt. 23, containing the Saviour's manifold woes upon his wicked opponents, equaling this in its intensity of expression and invective. In their character, in their operations, in the judgments coming upon them, these men are fully described. The sins of these men resemble those just spoken of as sins against nature; the men themselves resemble the notably ungodly men of the olden times (ver. 8-11).

**8. Likewise . . . dreamers,**

defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, \*The

\* Exod. 22:28.

t Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Rev. 12:7.

x 1 Chron. 12:17; Zech. 3:2.

defile the flesh, reject dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed concerning the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord

u 2 Peter 2:11.

rather, *yet in like manner, these also in their dreamings.* These men are described as walking in the same destructive course as the persons upon whom penalties had come, notwithstanding these warnings. The participle rendered *in their dreamings* belongs equally to the three following statements. It describes the character of the men as visionary, as living in a land of dreams, not realizing the true condition of affairs as it really is in God's sight. It may further describe them as so fully set in their wickedness that even in their dreams, as well as in their waking moments, they executed wickedness. Three things are affirmed of them. They follow the example of Sodom in its licentiousness, **defile the flesh** by unnatural lust. The allusion is not to their own flesh, but to flesh in a general way, to our common human nature, which they degraded. If the animal part of man is not restrained by the commands of the moral law, it is but a step to a sensual life. That human nature in this century needs the restraints of the high moral commands of God is evident from the rapid growth of Mormonism, and the presence of communistic societies with their sensual practises. **Despise . . . dignities**, rather, *and set at naught dominion and rail at dignities.* Calvin understands these two expressions to refer to their contempt of the civil authorities, indicating seditious and anarchistic men. Others understand them to refer to the defiance of the church authorities, to presbyters who were set at naught by these turbulent men. It is better, however, to understand **dominion** as standing for the headship of Christ (ver. 4), which was utterly set at naught by them, denying his sovereignty by their disobedience to his commands. A contempt for Christ would beget a contempt for the civil laws and for the church which represented Christ. The **dignities** may refer also to the unscen-

and supernatural world, inasmuch as they speak with irreverence of angels, using mocking terms also concerning Satan (ver. 10). If they were insubordinate to God and the higher intelligences, breaking over God's moral laws, they would also be disobedient to all other laws. A right relation toward Christ means a church that is loved and a citizenship that is regarded as sacred. A good man cannot be a bad church-member or a bad citizen.

**9. Yet, rather, but.** The name **Michael**, meaning "who is like God?" occurs elsewhere only in Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7. The term **archangel** occurs elsewhere only in 1 Thess. 4:16 and in Dan. 12:1 in the Septuagint. There is no allusion to this event in the Old Testament Scriptures nor in any extant book. Origen, who died A. D. 254, says the reference is taken from an apocryphal book called "The Ascension of Moses." The Bible account of the death of Moses is very brief (Deut. 34:5, 6), but the Jews had many legends concerning it. There was a prevalent tradition that Michael had been appointed to minister at the death of Moses, and that Satan urged that his murder of the Egyptian (Exod. 2:12) had deprived him of the right of sepulture. Judas' manner of writing makes it evident that the event was well known to all his readers. This could not have been the case had this been made known to him by a special revelation to himself, for he takes it for granted that all are familiar with it. **Durst not.** The drift of the passage indicates that this restraint arose from the former greatness of Satan. Even in speaking to an evil angel there was a self-restraint caused by the presence of greatness and authority. **Accusation**, rather, *judgment*. The condemnation is referred to the Almighty, to whom alone justice and judgment ultimately belong. In Peter's corresponding statement the reference is to angels, not to Moses, and

10 Lord rebuke thee. ¶ But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they

10 rebuke thee! But these rail at whatever things they know not; but what things naturally, as the irrational creatures, they understood, in these they

v 2 Peter 2 : 12.

the Scripture allusion seems to be found in Zech. 3 : 2. How did Jude become acquainted with this incident? It is not found in the Scriptures; it did not come to him through any special revelation. We are shut up to two sources, either a trustworthy tradition not found in the Scriptures, or a floating tradition which he found ready to hand, and popularly received. Plumptre thinks that the presence of the tradition here does not in itself declare its historic character; it served merely as a fitting illustration of the point he was urging, the need of veneration for authority as such, whether the incident was historically true or not. Alford writes in this way: "Jude took the incident from some primitive tradition, which tradition, slightly modified, is also given by the prophet Zechariah. That the incident is related as a matter of fact is evident on the very face of it. That being thus related as a matter of fact, it is a conclusion which will or will not be made according as we are or are not persuaded of the authority of our epistle as a part of the canonical Scripture." It is evident that if we eliminate this incident from the Scriptures as not worthy of credence, we must also, on the same ground, refuse to accept the like statement in Zech. 3 : 2. That the incident took place in the unseen world is no proof of its unworthiness, especially when we consider that Christianity itself, in its founding and in its preservation, is a supernatural system. That there were trustworthy traditions outside of the written Scriptures is seen in Paul's writings, in which he mentions the names of the opponents of Moses (2 Tim. 3 : 8). It remains true, however, that a person may regard this letter as canonical and inspired, and yet regard this incident as not necessarily historical in character. It is conceivable that Jude, finding this tradition known to all, believed in, in a general way, by all, made use of it in this manner without considering whether it was founded on fact.

"Have we any right to assume that inspiration raises a writer to the intellectual position of a critical historian with power to discriminate between legend and fact? St. Jude probably believed the story about the dispute between Michael and Satan to be true; but even if he knew it to be a myth, he might nevertheless readily use it as an illustrative argument, seeing that it was so familiar to his readers. If an inspired writer were living now, would it be quite incredible that he should make use of Dante's 'Purgatory' or Shakespeare's 'King Lear'?" (Plumpter).

**10. But . . . themselves,** rather, *but these rail at whatsoever things they know not; and what they understand naturally like the creatures without reason, in these things they are destroyed.* These implies a feeling of contempt for them, and a surprise also at their audacity. **Know not.** This expression implies a certain knowledge, not, however, complete and full, of the higher order of beings, good and evil; at these beings they use only railing terms. They fear them not; they defy them. Mistaken notions concerning the angels had much to do with the worship and thought of the first century. (See Col. 1 : 18.) *Understand naturally.* This is a different term from that rendered *know*, applying here to the knowledge gained only from the physical and sensual side of the nature. They perverted even their animal appetites, going beyond the beasts in their lusts. (Comp. Rom. 1 : 26, 27.) In the second century were many unworthy and foul sects. *In these things.* The reference is to the elements of knowledge which they possess in common with the irrational creatures, through which also they work out their physical and moral ruin. (Read 2 Peter 2 : 12.)

**11.** As these ungodly men resembled the disobedient Jews and angels, and the fleshly cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, in like manner they resembled three of the notably bad men of the

11 corrupt themselves. Woe unto them ! for they have gone in the way <sup>a</sup> of Cain, and <sup>b</sup> ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished <sup>b</sup> in the gainsaying of Core.

12 <sup>c</sup>These are spots in your <sup>d</sup>feasts of

11 are destroyed. Woe to them ! Because they went in the way of Cain, and rushed on in the error of Balaam for wages, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

12 These are the hidden rocks in your

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 4 : 5-14; 1 John 3 : 12.

<sup>b</sup> Num. 22 : 7, 21; 2 Peter 2 : 15.

<sup>b</sup> Num. 16 : 1, etc.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Peter 2 : 13, 14.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. 11 : 21.

Old Testament history. **Woe.** Jesus used this term eight times in his address in Matt. 23, indicative of the corrupt condition and impending doom of those thus addressed. As used by him there was a blended pity, tenderness, and condemnation, in sight of their present and future wretchedness. He made use of heavy, condemning words that through them they might see their own moral condition and flee from it. If these ungodly men had already begun to suffer God's judgments, the woe indicates his feelings of horror, his reprobation of their course in life.

**Have gone**, rather, *went*. **Cain.** He stands as a type of selfishness, self-will, envy, hate, murder. These men have lived selfish lives, not concerned about God's commands or the ruin of others. See John's use of Cain's name, 1 John 3 : 12. Farrar and Plumptre think that Judas, in his reference to Cain, makes allusion to some of the many Jewish traditions concerning him and his impieties. These men were traveling on the same road in which Cain walked ; they were Cains in heart.

**Ran . . . reward**, rather, *ran violently in the error of Balaam for hire*. Balaam stands for a certain intellectual keenness and power, for enlightenment of mind in the knowledge of God's will, for licentiousness, for avarice. See the story of Balaam, Num. 22 to 24. **Error** refers to the moral delinquency of Balaam, his departure from the truth. *Ran violently.* The verb thus rendered means to pour out one's self upon any course of life. It was a life earnest in its badness. **Hire.** This is the price paid for the ungodly life of the Balaam kind, whether it be money gotten by false teachings, the influence gained by the departure from the truth, or the pleasure enjoyed. The wages of sin, in the end, is death (Rom. 6 : 23). **Core**, rather, *Korah*. For the Scripture incident, see Num. 16. *Korah* stands for the organized

opposition to the truth and authority of God as manifested in the church. He arrayed himself against Aaron and the religious ordinances of his times. The opening earth swallowed him, expressing God's utter disapproval of his principles and methods. These ungodly men were repeating in the first century the wickedness and rebellion of Korah in the olden times. Jude speaks of a punishment that had already overtaken them. This, however, might be his strong manner of saying that a judgment would speedily overtake them. It is implied here that the believing part of the church occupies the place filled by Moses, Aaron, and their faithful followers. Selfishness, licentiousness, and insubordination are all portrayed here as found in these ungodly men, and as incurring a just penalty from the God of truth and righteousness. The study of church history is valuable in showing that few fundamental errors arise in the church, or assail it from without, that have not in past centuries arisen, done their work, and been condemned by God and the truth. The ungodly teachers are described, not by way of contrast with others, but as they are in themselves (ver. 12, 13). The sins of the teachers have been compared with those of the unbelieving Jews, the disobedient angels, the licentious Sodomites. They have been compared with the archangel Michael, to their great disparagement. They have been likened to a wicked trinity of Old Testament men—Cain, Balaam, Korah. These teachers are now portrayed as they are in themselves, their own characters, by means of a number of forcible illustrations.

12. An important variation in the reading occurs here. **These . . . charity**, rather, *These are they who are hidden rocks in your love feasts.* It is easy to see how, in a careless transcribing, *agapais*, meaning love

charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, <sup>b</sup> twice dead,

love-feasts, when they feast with you, fearlessly shepherding themselves: waterless clouds swept along by winds; autumn trees, without fruit, twice

*e* Phil. 3 : 19.

*f* Prov. 25 : 14; 2 Peter 2 : 17.

*g* Eph. 4 : 14.

*h* 2 Peter 2 : 20.

feasts, might be changed into *apatusis*, deceits. *Hidden rocks*. The meaning of this is a rock, a reef nearing the surface covered by the water, upon which the vessel might easily be wrecked. Judas describes the dangerous power of the teachers as consisting in their concealed wickedness. The term occurs in this place only in the New Testament, but it is frequent in other writings. The word rendered "spots" in 2 Peter 2 : 13 is a word similar to this, a rock that appears above the surface as a spot, a blot upon the pure face of the waters. *Love feasts*. These were social gatherings of the Christian brotherhood springing up in the first century, not commanded as ordinances of the church, but arising as the expression of the new community of feeling for each other. They were at the first a simple repast, changing in time into something more elaborate. They were at the first held in connection with the Lord's Supper, but distinct from it. Abuses had begun to spring up at these feasts even in the days of the apostles. (See 1 Cor. 11 : 21.) Dangers lurk alongside of even the best things, insomuch that these love feasts that ought to have been the means of making the church life a real family fellowship, became oftentimes a source of selfishness, gluttony, class distinction, of scandal, and immorality. *Feast with you* shows that these false teachers had even yet a membership in the churches. *Feeding . . . fear*, rather, *shepherds that without fear feed themselves*. The term rendered *feeding* means feeding as a shepherd, showing conclusively that the ungodly persons here described were men claiming to be teachers. It is the same word that is used in Acts 20 : 28; 1 Peter 5 : 2, meaning in both passages the pastoral office. One who is a teacher has a far wider opportunity for spreading error than one who fills simply the place of a member. These persons did not act as true shepherds would, caring for others, watch-

ing over the flock, but were false shepherds, such as described by Isa. 46 : 11; Ezek. 34 : 1, 2, 8, 10, indulging their own lusts with impunity in defiance of authority. The love feasts were turned by them, and for them, into places of excess and sensuality. *Clouds . . . winds*, rather, *clouds without water carried along by winds*. In the corresponding place in 2 Peter 2 : 17 we have wells. The same figure is used in Prov. 25 : 14. The clouds dropping water bring refreshings and harvests; without water they are a disappointment, a deception. These teachers could not supply the real wants of their followers, they were not in fellowship with Christ, who is the truth. Jude alludes to the light and frivolous character of these teachers, varying also in their teaching. *Carried along*. See also Eph. 4 : 14 for an illustration of fickleness of belief. These teachers were showy, attractive, but deceptive, enslaving others to false notions and false lives because themselves enslaved. *Trees . . . fruit*, rather, *autumn trees without fruit*. They are like trees in the late autumn, when there is nothing but the withered and withering leaf. The trees themselves are withered just at that season when men are looking for fruit. They have not lost their strength through fruit-bearing, for they are without fruit, implying also that they have been fruitless all the time. Jesus spoke frequently concerning fruit and fruit-bearing (Matt. 3 : 10; 7 : 16-29; Luke 13 : 6-9). Compare also barren fig tree (Matt. 21 : 10). *Twice dead*, utterly dead. Jude does not intend to refer to a twofold death that would come to the teachers, a death here and a death hereafter, but to the apparent dying of the tree when the leaves fell and the real dying that ensued. There is a forcible climax in the terms used: withering, fruitless, twice dead, rooted up. As the dead trees naturally are cut down or rooted up (see Matt. 3 : 10), so will these teachers, dead morally and spiritually, be destroyed. Com-

**13** <sup>1</sup>plucked up by the roots; <sup>2</sup>raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars,<sup>1</sup>to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

**14** And Enoch also, <sup>m</sup>the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying,

*i* Ezek. 17 : 8-10; Matt. 15 : 13.

*k* Isa. 57 : 20.

*l* 2 Peter 2 : 17.

*m* Gen. 5 : 18.

pare passages which speak of being rooted up as symbols of destruction, Ps. 30 : 28; 52 : 5; Prov. 2 : 22.

**13.** In one sense the teachers are protruding rocks, dangerous to the mariner; in another sense they are raging seas. They furnish a picture of violence, of recklessness, of dangers to all who entrust themselves to their care. (Comp. the words of Isa. 57 : 29.) **Shame.** The word is literally shames, as indicating the manifold forms of deception, sensuality, and turbulence in their teachers. Jude does not intend that each figure employed should be taken in its literalness, but he desires by the heaping up of term upon term to express his utter abhorrence of their deeds, their characters, their influence.

**Wandering stars.** The Greek term here is that which means planets as distinct from the fixed stars. Jude here means comets, meteors, and such kindred phenomena which flash out for a time, are of no service for purposes of light or guidance, and then disappear in the darkness. In like manner these men, flashing out with large pretensions, will sink into destruction utter and final. Jesus speaks of the outer darkness (Matt. 22 : 13). Judas has already spoken of the everlasting chains (ver. 6); of eternal fire (ver. 7). The rocks, the clouds, the twice-dead trees, the raging waves, the meteors going out into darkness, stand for what is dangerous, deceptive, turbulent, mischievous in sky and on earth and sea. This passage is a commentary on his words in ver. 9, urging men to condemn sparingly. He does not intend that rank ungodliness and dangerous teachings shall be tenderly dealt with. There are times when only stern words and forcible figures can rightly express the attitude of the faithful prophet and teacher. These ungodly men are compared in a sevenfold way to natural objects; they are like creatures without reason (ver. 10); like hidden rocks (ver. 12); like shepherds caring

13 dead, rooted up; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness has been kept forever.

**14** And to these also Enoch a seventh from Adam prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came, with his holy

not for the flocks (ver. 12); like deceptive clouds (ver. 12); like fruit trees utterly dead (ver. 13); like raging waves (ver. 13); like wandering stars (ver. 13). In no other place are so many figures heaped upon one another.

**14, 15.** A PROPHECY OF ENOCH IS GIVEN, TESTIFYING AGAINST THE UNGODLY. Judas has uttered words of great severity against the false teachers and ungodly people. He is not without warrant in this, inasmuch as old-time prophecies had been uttered concerning men like these. To him, as to all his Jewish readers alike, the words of admitted prophecy would be sure and unerring words.

**14.** *Of these*, rather, *to these*. The term here used implies an utterance concerning them as also in addition an address to them in a direct way.

**Enoch.** See for all we know of him Gen. 5 : 21-24; Heb. 11 : 5. Attempts have been made to allegorize the name, inasmuch as his age is stated as three hundred and sixty-five years, but there is no occasion to doubt his real existence. Many Jewish fables are gathered around his name, such as his great wisdom and skill in natural science.

**Seventh.** This number in the Old Testament is full of significance, implying completeness. Inasmuch as he was the head of the seventh generation, including Adam, this fact is stated as adding, in a certain way, significance and force to his prophecy. Jewish writers are ever noting the occurrence of this number, as that Moses was the seventh from Abraham. See in the Introduction the recurrence of the number three in the structure of this letter.

**Prophesied.** This term has a twofold meaning. It primarily means a speaking for God and from God. He was a true prophet who spoke words for the times, denouncing unrighteousness, revealing God's will, encouraging right doing. Knowing God's nature as one of holiness, and understanding thereby the principles

Behold, <sup>a</sup> the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their <sup>b</sup>hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

15 myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they did, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners spoke against him.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. 33 : 2; Dan. 7 : 10; Zech. 14 : 5; Matt. 23 : 31; 2 Thess. 1 : 7; Rev. 1 : 7.  
<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. 2 : 3; Ps. 31 : 18; 94 : 4; Mal. 3 : 13.

of the divine government in the world, a religious teacher could foretell that God would, in time, punish ungodliness. There could also be a definite illumination of the mind whereby this teaching would be clearly known. There is also a place for predictive prophecy. The coming of a deliverer is first announced in Gen. 3 : 15. Sacrifices which were, in reality, a symbolic prophecy were established, without doubt, by a divine command. It would be fitting in a time when wickedness abounded, and to a man like Enoch, living in fellowship with God, that special revelations should be given. This prediction has been fulfilled in manifold ways at different times. God came at the flood; in the judgments upon Israel and the surrounding nations, at the fall of Jerusalem; it will be further fulfilled at the final personal coming of Christ. This prophecy does not refer to any definite time, but is a general declaration that God will intervene on behalf of righteousness upon the earth. **Lord.** The term, Lord, must not be interpreted to mean that Enoch had a full view of the person, mission, and coming of the Lord Jesus. In a general way the term here stands for God in some of his manifestations. We must not interpret into the knowledge of the Old Testament saints the full New Testament teaching. **Cometh,** rather, *came*. This is the historic tense of prophecy, the prophet speaking of a future era as if it already were present or were past, he himself standing in the midst of it. No one can rationally deny a predictive element to prophecy if he admit the existence of an all-knowing God with whom the prophet is in fellowship. **Saints,** rather, *holy ones*. The reference here is to angels as holy beings. (See Deut. 33 : 2; Zech. 14 : 5; Matt. 16 : 27.) God has myriads of holy angels and holy saintly living ones from the earth in his service.

(See Heb 12 : 12.) For our knowledge of angels we are dependent upon revelation.

**15.** This verse gives the purpose of the Lord's coming. **Execute judgment.** Reference is here, not to a test of all men, so much as the passing of a righteous doom upon those deserving punishment. **Convince,** rather, *convict*. To convict is a far stronger word than to convince, which usually means to persuade a man of the reasonableness of a certain course of action. Here it means to pass sentence upon the ungodly as the result of their evident guilt. The characteristic feature of the antediluvian world was its ungodliness, the term ungodly occurring four times in this verse. There was a depravity of heart that came out in a depraved life. (See Gen. 6 : 5.) It is possible that in these words we have the substance of the teachings given by Enoch, his denunciations of the ungodly men of his age. Some think that the style here is different from that of Jnde, and favors the view that this is a direct quotation from Enoch. **Hard.** Nothing would be more natural than that in such an age filled with impiety, rough and abusive words would be uttered concerning him and concerning God's government. In saying that God does not notice the deeds of men, that he does not care, that he makes no moral discriminations, that wickedness will not be punished, that piety is not profitable—these statements, in reality, revile God and his government. Byron's portrait of Cain reveals such a man saying hard things against God.

**16-19. THE UNGODLY TEACHERS ARE DESCRIBED AS MOCKERS, SEN-SUAL, SCHISMATIC.** Having given the quotation from Enoch in which the ungodly are described as speaking hard things against God, Jude now justifies that statement by a further description of them. They are portrayed as per-

- 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.
- 17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- 16 These are murmurers, complaining of their lot, walking according to their desires; and their mouth speaks swelling words; admiring men's persons, for the sake of profit.
- 17 But do ye, beloved, remember the words which were before spokēn by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

p 2 Peter 2 : 18.

q Prov. 28 : 21; James 2 : 1-9.

r 2 Peter 3 : 2.

sons in revolt against God, against the present order of things, as mockers to whom holy things count nothing, as destitute of the highest life, as destroying the unity of the church.

**16.** These men so described in prophecy, men pointed out and condemned by Jude, are **murmurers, complainers**, the words occurring here only in the New Testament. They murmur against God's decrees, and find fault with his providence. They blame God for their condition in life, and for the moral restrictions which he had imposed upon them. They are out of harmony with God. There is probably also a spirit of insubordination against the constraints of society and the church, especially against the church if discipline had been exercised against them. The modern term pessimism reveals the state of mind indicated, a view which regards all things as in disorder, which finds no source of happiness or hope; an utter extreme from the view of Paul, who placed God in the center of the moral universe, and looked upon all things as working for good to those in harmony with God. **Walking . . . lusts.** This course of life is a result of their character. Throwing off the restraints of the law and love of God, self-willed, they would naturally walk after their own passions, which would be as gods to them. Living this kind of a life they would naturally grow discontented. A selfish life is an unsatisfying life. **Swelling words.** This may refer to the claims of wisdom made by them, to the large knowledge assumed. They boasted of their knowledge, far surpassing that of the common people, affirming their superiority to all the laws and restraints of God. Their Christian liberty included the right to be free from all God's commands, otherwise their liberty itself would be a delusion. Paul speaks of being made free from the law of sin, but made cap-

tive to the law of Christ. No heresy of the New Testament times was more dangerous or more seductive than the teaching that the Christian life is free from the binding power of the moral law. It introduced licentiousness, not in an open way, but under the guise of religion. It was in reference to such knowledge that Paul said, "Knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8 : 1). Their assumed knowledge was not a real knowledge, but one falsely so called (1 Tim. 6 : 20). It is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ, having the character that naturally comes from this knowledge within the heart (John 17 : 3). Paul counted all things but loss that he might know Christ (Phil. 3 : 8). **Having . . . advantage**, rather, *showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage*. This is an accurate description of Balaam, who sold his powers for the reward that he hoped to gain from Balak. These men formed their beliefs on mercenary plans. They rebelled against God, but they were servile toward men for the sake of position, pleasure, profit. Many references are made in the New Testament to teachers who taught for the sake of money (Titus 1 : 7, 11). See Paul's words and example in refusing to take money for his teaching (Acts 20 : 33, 34). James forbids the spirit manifested by these men (James 2 : 1-3). The Spirit of Jesus Christ does not create or foster a social caste in the church; it rather makes a holy society, a brotherhood, a reasonable communism. The teacher must not teach, courting popularity. He must speak what God bids him, whether men will hear or forbear.

**17.** Believers ought not to be surprised that mockers arise. **But beloved**, rather, *but ye, beloved*. The *ye* is emphatic, in contrast with the ungodly element in the church. As in ver. 5, Jude recalls their former knowledge and remembrance. **Spoken before.** The tense is imperfect, which

18 how that they told you \*there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.  
19 These be they †who separate them-

18 that they said to you, in the last time there will be scoffers, walking after 19 their own ungodly desires. These are they who make separations; natural,

\* Acts 20 : 29; 1 Tim. 4 : 1, 2; 2 Tim. 3 : 1; 2 Peter 3 : 3.

† Isa. 65:5; Ezek. 14 : 7; Hosea 4 : 14; 9 : 10; Heb. 10 : 25; 1 John 2 : 19.

often means a repeated doing, as if Jude or if the apostles had been accustomed to forewarn them. The reference may be either to oral teachings or to their writings. For a long time there was a set, formal round of teachings before the Gospels took their present shape. It is implied here that his readers were fully acquainted with the apostolic teaching, so that they would at once accept his statement as in accord with their own knowledge. It is implied also that the teaching of the apostles was authoritative, so that if anything had been taught by them, it ought to be accepted by the church as an article of belief or rule of conduct. As the teachings of Jesus were incomplete (John 16 : 12), he made provision for the enlargement of the truth through the Holy Spirit promised to them (John 16 : 13); the formal teachings of the apostles are to be accepted as of equal authority as if spoken by Christ himself. In the corresponding place in 2 Peter 3 : 2 allusion is made to the prophets as foretelling the coming of false teachers. In this passage Jude alludes to the apostles as announcing their coming. (See Acts 20 : 29, 30; 1 Tim. 4 : 1.) All the Epistles reveal the presence of false teachers and false teachings, sometimes almost crowding the truth out of its place (Gal. 3 : 1). That Jude does not put himself among the apostles is an indication that he does not regard himself as one. This expression would not, in itself, make it certain that he was not an apostle; but taken in connection with other incidents makes it one of the certainties that he was not one of the Twelve. This letter would not thereby lose its power as a part of the Scriptures, for other writers, as Mark and Luke, were not of the apostolic body. The expression *spoken before* does not assert that a long period had elapsed since these warnings were given, though if this letter was written about A. D. 75, most of the apostolic body were already dead.

**18. Told . . . time, rather, said to**

*you, in the last time.* This is the substance of the announcement by the apostles. *Last time.* This is not Jude's expression, but that of the apostles. They did not mean an age far distant from their own. The *last time* was that era which began with the coming of Christ, so that they were already in that period. See instances of a like use of this term in 2 Tim. 3 : 1, 2; 1 John 2 : 18; 1 Peter 1 : 20. The same word for *mockers* is used here as in 2 Peter 3 : 3. Inasmuch as Peter was an apostle, and Jude speaks of the warnings given by the apostles, it is probable the passage in this letter is a quotation from Peter's writings. The word is an unusual one, occurring only here and in Peter. The mockers, in Peter's day, made sport of the predictions concerning the return of Jesus. Jude does not specify in what particulars this mockery consisted. Mockery is more difficult to meet than argument; it is also harder to reach such men and bring them under the power of the truth. A spirit thoughtful and reverent, that questions even the fundamentals of the faith, may be reasoned with and convinced, but a spirit that treats the most serious questions in a light and flippant way cannot be reached. **Who should walk, rather, walking.** *Ungodly lusts,* literally, *lusts of ungodlinesses*, meaning that these unholy desires arise from the various forms of impiety. In the prophecy from Enoch, ver. 15, the word *ungodly* occurs in an emphatic manner.

**19. Again Jude returns to a description of the false teachers, describing them, not as realizing the prophetic announcement (ver. 17, 18), but as they reveal themselves in the church life and in their own personal lives. Separate themselves, rather, causing divisions.** This word occurs only here in the New Testament. The author does not mean that they separate themselves from the church, becoming thereby schismatics,

20 selves, <sup>u</sup>sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, <sup>x</sup>building up your-

20 having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. 2 : 14; James 3 : 15.

<sup>x</sup> Col. 2 : 7.

for they belong to the church and attend the love feasts. These men had departed from the practice of piety, and were walking in the ways of ungodliness. They were men having the spirit of Korah, leading to separation in the church. These were persons who would despise the poorer members, associating with the wealthy, making divisions on social lines. They laid claims to a large knowledge and a spiritual enlightenment, holding ordinary believers in contempt. They were selfish at feasts, and had a domineering spirit like Diotrephes (<sup>3</sup> John 9). Paul writes of members causing divisions (Rom. 16 : 17, 18); of members who make a god of their passions (Phil. 3 : 18, 19). The present participle shows their habit to be that of making separations in the membership. A factious person is as dangerous to a church as one holding unsound views. The etymological meaning of heretic is that of one making divisions (Titus 3 : 10). **Sensual.** This does not mean licentious, depraved, which is the usual meaning of the term to-day. The term is that employed by Paul in 1 Cor. 3 : 14 in describing the natural man as distinct from the spiritual man; it is also used in 1 Cor. 15 : 44, where the natural body is distinguished from the spiritual body. Jude means that the man lives in the domain of his emotional and perceptive faculties, and is not under the control of the moral nature, the enlightened reason, the conscience which forms a part of his spiritual nature. Paul, at times, separates man into three parts—body, soul, spirit (1 Thess. 5 : 23). The word here rendered sensual is the translation of soul, hence a psychical man, not so low as the fleshly man, but not identical with the spiritual man. Lying between the two terms, body and spirit, it is regarded as in alliance with the flesh and under its control. **Not having the Spirit.** The article is not found before spirit, so that it is a matter of doubt whether the Holy Spirit is meant or not. It is usually the case that the term spirit, without any modifying term, refers to man's spirit only. It is better to re-

gard Jude as referring here to man's spirit. So supreme has the lower part of man's nature become, so selfish and self-indulgent has been the life, that the spiritual element in them had become almost extirpated; they were as men having no spirit upon which the Holy Spirit could work. In all probability these godless teachers had claimed to be especially spiritual persons, to whom special revelations had come through the Spirit insomuch that they were above the commands of the moral law, and could indulge in fleshly passions without injury. Jude declares that not only are they not under the control of the Spirit, but that there is nothing in them to which the Holy Spirit can appeal. It is the severest indictment that can be brought against men: that through disuse and misuse the highest faculty in their nature, that through which they may become the children of God, has become almost extinct, so that even God cannot reach them. They have become intellectual animals.

**20-23. WORDS OF COUNSEL FOR THE BELIEVING ELEMENT IN THE CHURCH.** In contrast with the impassioned invective used concerning the sensual, licentious, and heretical teachers, extending from ver. 10 to ver. 19, Jude now turns in calm exhortation to the holy element of the church. As destructive errors were rife among them, assailing the truth even within the church, it was needful for them to be especially on their guard. A growth in the spiritual life is urged upon them (ver. 20, 21).

**20.** The best safeguard against error, in doctrine or life, is a rich and full spiritual life. This verse is a resumption of the exhortation beginning in ver. 17. **But ye.** These words are emphatic, in contrast with the pestilential men described above. **Building up.** The false teachers were making divisions, thereby rending the church into factions, destroying its unity and power. These are exhorted to build themselves up. The foundation on which this believing structure is to rest is faith, looked upon here not as the

selves on your most holy faith, <sup>y</sup> pray-  
21 ing in the Holy Ghost, <sup>z</sup> keep yourselves  
in the love of God, <sup>a</sup> looking for the  
mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto

most holy faith, praying in the Holy  
Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of  
God, looking for the mercy of our Lord

<sup>y</sup> Eph. 6:18.      <sup>z</sup> John 15:9, 10; Acts 11:23; 1 John 5:18, 21.  
<sup>a</sup> Lam. 3:25, 26; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:12.

internal belief in God, the saving faith, but faith in its objective sense, with the meaning of belief, creed. (See ver. 3.) It is a **most holy** faith in contrast with the unholy and foul teachings of the errorists. The appeal is not to the building of the individual spiritual life, but of the organized body, looked upon as a temple of God. (See 1 Cor. 3.) It is the growth in godliness, in holy living, in clear intellectual perception of the truth, in right views of Scripture teachings, a growth that depends upon their own co-operation. It is a divine-human growth in knowledge and clearness insisted upon. In this growth three things are essential, prayer, a sense of God's love, an expectancy of Christ's mercy. **Praying . . . Ghost**, rather, *Spirit*. The term *Ghost* should always be displaced by that of *Spirit*, inasmuch as the term *ghost* has become associated with the disembodied human spirit. This expression occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but its teaching is in correspondence with other New Testament teachings. See the expression "speaking in the spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Compare also the expression in Rom. 8:26. In order to pray aright there must be the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the suggestions in the creation of the prayer. The Spirit knows what is the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:11); the Spirit can therefore effectively help in prayer. Some would join the expression, "in the Holy Spirit," to the preceding part of this passage, but it is better to join it with the praying. The false teachers were destitute of the Spirit; the believers live, as it were, in the domain of the Holy Spirit; they pray in the Spirit. The life of prayer will beget in them a spiritual clearness whereby they will be kept free from destructive errors.

**21. Keep.** This verb is in the aorist tense, implying thus one complete act of their life, an act to be continued through their upbuilding and their praying. **Love of God.** This

may refer to their love for God or to God's love for them. It is more in accord with the New Testament usage to regard this as God's love to them; they were to keep themselves within the limit of God's favoring and approving love, manifested by their continued growth in the Christian character and in their devout spiritual life (John 15:9; Rom. 8:39; 2 Cor. 5:14). **Looking for**, in the present tense, expresses the attitude of the life, revealing a confident expectancy of receiving the mercy spoken of. (See Titus 2:13; Heb. 10:34; 11:35.) This mercy, which is constantly manifest in his treatment of the penitent, guilty man, issues in its fulness in the eternal life, which is revealed at the second coming of Christ. There is an eternal life now (John 17:3); its full power and glory will be realized only in the after life (Matt. 19:29). Some join the expression **unto eternal life** with both preceding statements, keeping yourselves and receiving and waiting for the Saviour's mercy, both of which united will form such a character as will ripen unto eternal blessedness. Without any formal teaching concerning the Trinity, Jude gives full expression to the distinctions in the Godhead, Father, Christ, Spirit. This incidental allusion to the Trinity is, in reality, a strong proof that this doctrine was accepted by all in the first century. It is noticeable that the **mercy** is here attributed, not as usually to God, but to the Father and to the Son, as is the case in the pastoral Epistles. The entire Godhead is concerned directly in the salvation of the soul.

**THE ATTITUDE OF BELIEVERS TOWARD PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN LED INTO ERROR.** These must be dealt with according to their special characteristics, with a greater or less severity. Jude has previously exhorted them to contend for the completed faith delivered to them (ver. 3). Concerning the false teachers themselves, he has expressed himself as having no hope

22 eternal life. <sup>b</sup> And of some have com-  
23 passion, making a difference: and  
others save with fear, <sup>c</sup> pulling *them*  
out of the fire; hating even <sup>d</sup> the gar-  
ment spotted by the flesh.

<sup>b</sup> Gal. 6:1.

<sup>c</sup> Amos 4:11; Zech. 3:2.

22 Jesus Christ, to eternal life. And  
some refute when they are contend-  
ing; and some save, snatching them  
23 out of the fire; and some compas-  
sionate with fear, hating even the gar-  
ment spotted by the flesh.

<sup>d</sup> Lev. 13:47-59; Zech. 3:4, 5; 1 Cor. 5:9-11.

for them (ver. 12). But many of the members had been exposed to their disastrous influences; these must, if possible, be rescued from the error. Three kinds of men are described. He displays great wisdom in classifying them (ver. 22, 23).

**22. And . . . difference,** the Revised version reads, *And on some have mercy, who are in doubt.* But the Bible Union version renders: *And some refute when they are contending.* The MSS here vary exceedingly. The Expositor's Bible says: "The Greek text here is in so corrupt a state that the original cannot be restored with certainty." In half a score of places in the New Testament there is doubt concerning the original text, but on no one of these does any important teaching rest. Alford reads, *And some indeed convict when contending with you.* The word *refute* or *convict* is the same word as used in John 16:8; Eph. 5:11. So also Plumptre. The older manuscripts adopt this reading. For *who are in doubt*, the Revised version reads in the margin, "when they are disputing with you." According to one reading, the meaning seems to be, those professing Christians who were honestly in the darkness and in doubt must be tenderly dealt with. They must not be upbraided or unduly censured; they must be led into the larger truth by a wise presentation of right views. It requires great wisdom to deal with the doubts and perplexities of men. According to the older reading, the meaning seems to be, those teachers who are given to disputing should be severely dealt with. "There is more point in the contrast between the teachers who need a severe rebuke and those who may be saved with fear, than in the two degrees of pity presented by the Received text" (PLUMPTRE).

**23. And others . . . fire,** rather, *and some save, snatching them out of the fire.* These persons have gone farther on the road to error than the first class. Partly through their own

low spiritual condition, partly through different temperaments, partly through stronger seductions, these are nearly swept into the doctrines and life of the licentious teachers. There seems to be here a reminiscence of the words in Zech. 3:1, "a brand plucked from the fire"; see also Amos 4:11; Gen. 19:16, 17. These persons need a more rigorous and severe treatment than the first class; they were in greater peril. Their feet had almost slipped (Ps. 73:2). The third class is not mentioned at all in the Received version, *and on some have mercy with fear.* These persons also require a tender concern for them and a sympathetic treatment. They are to have consideration and mercy shown to them. The expression *with fear* may have reference to the person in error; the result of the effort to save him is in great doubt. Or it may mean that the effort to save brings a danger to the believer, the evil may be so contagious that it may contaminate the one attempting the rescue. Persons associated closely with evil and evil persons are in great peril themselves. One may mingle intimately with error only by keeping close to Him who is the truth and holiness. There must be a love for the errorist, but a hatred for the error. **Hating . . . flesh.** The *garment* spoken of is that which is worn next to the body. If the body were unclean or leprous, the garment would contaminate any person touching it. James speaks of a moral defilement, using the word here rendered *spotted* (James 3:6). Zechariah also speaks of foul garments (Zech. 3:1-8). The garment stands for anything in the outward life that becomes an occasion of sinfulness. In the Old Testament times there was a ceremonial uncleanness that belonged to outward things; in all this was the effort on the part of God to awaken in them the sense of moral uncleanness. It will be noticed that Jude discriminates between the one who seduced into error and the various kinds of men who were led

**24** Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

e John 10 : 29, 30; Rom. 16 : 25; Eph. 3 : 20.  
g Matt. 25 : 31; 1 Peter 4 : 13.

**24** Now to him who is able to guard you from falling, and to set you without blemish in gladness before the presence 25 of his glory; to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, before all time, and now, and forever. Amen.

f Eph. 5 : 27; Col. 1 : 22; Rev. 14 : 1-5.  
h Rom. 16 : 27; 1 Tim. 1 : 17; 2 : 3; 2 Peter 1 : 1.

astray, adjusting his treatment to the standing of each class. The wise teacher must rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2 : 15). A reckless and unwise contention for the truth, and the indiscriminate condemnation of all who do not have right conceptions of the truth, may work great disaster to the cause of Christ.

**24, 25. THE DOXOLOGY.** In ver. 21 Jude had exhorted them to keep themselves in the love of God. He now lifts up their heart to that same God whose grace can keep them unto eternal life hereafter, and from stumblings in the present life. False teachers abound, errors arise on every side, many believers are entangled in the enticing errors, but above all remains God in his almighty, his serenity, in his ultimate supremacy over all men and all beliefs. To this God the writer now turns their attention.

**24, 25. Able.** God is that one who is almighty, and his almighty is under the control of wisdom and love. In John 10 : 29 Jesus spoke of the ability of God his Father to guard them. **Keep.** This is not the same word that is used in ver. 21, but is a term that means placing a military guard around one for protection. See the same word used by the Saviour in John 17 : 12. **Falling**, rather, *stumbling*. The word *stumbling* is less serious than *falling*, so that one may stumble and yet not fall, in the full sense of the word. (See Rom. 11 : 11.) Through God's grace and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit they will be kept not only from apostasy, but from the grievous errors contended against in this letter. (See the same word in James 2 : 10; 2 Peter 1 : 10.) The Holy Spirit is given for the purpose of leading the believer into the truth (John 16 : 13). If the Scriptures alone were followed, if traditions and customs were to lose their power when not supported by the

inspired writings, many doctrines and practices now held erroneously would lose their power. Infant baptism, aspersions, baptismal regeneration, prayers for the dead, the mass, an unconverted church-membership would speedily disappear. There is no promise here of a personal life that would be without sin. There is no life higher than the Christian life, but in this life there are all gradations. No holy man of God has ever yet shown how much of God's keeping power he may appropriate, keeping from personal defilement and from doctrinal deviations. **To present . . . joy**, rather, *to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy*. **Without blemish** expresses the ultimate condition of God's people. They are frequently so described (Eph. 1 : 4; 5 : 27; Phil. 2 : 15; Col. 1 : 22). They will be spotless because Christ is spotless (Heb. 9 : 14; 1 Peter 1 : 19). **Glory** stands for the manifestations of Christ in his splendor. When here on the earth his condition was one of humiliation. It is now a condition in glory (John 17 : 24). He will appear in glory (Matt. 16 : 27). It is natural that a spotless life in the presence of a glorified Christ will create joy, *exceeding joy*, represented by one word in the Greek (Luke 1 : 14, 44; Acts 2 : 46). **Only wise God**, omit *wise*. This doxology is similar to that in 1 Tim. 1 : 17. No verb is expressed; it may, therefore, be a statement or a prayer. God is, or let God be. **God our Saviour . . . ever**, rather, *God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power before all time and now and forevermore*. God is called our Saviour as in 1 Tim. 2 : 3, inasmuch as God's love is the originating cause of salvation. (See John 3 : 16.) But God's love is manifested, and salvation is secured through Jesus Christ. That Jude accepted the divinity of Jesus Christ cannot be

doubted, for he so closely joins Jesus with the Father. It would be impossible for one born a Jew to join the name of a created being with the name of the uncreated God. These four terms, **glory . . . power**, sum up God's greatness, glory, and omnipotence. All of these are for the believer and against the false teacher and the life in sin. Compare the various doxologies in the New Testament to see in what varied ways the writers portray and praise God. *Before all time* expresses the past eternity. This, with the *and now* and the *forevermore*, joins all the eternities together in their fitting adoration of God. This letter contains no special salutations as do so many of the New Testament letters. (Comp. Rom. 16.) It is so far a letter of universal application. **Amen**, so let it be, or so in truth it is. The Expositor's Bible presents the closing doxology in the form of Hebrew poetry:

Now unto Him that is able to guard you  
from stumbling,  
And to set you before the presence of his  
glory without blemish and in exceeding  
joy.  
To the only God our Saviour,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Glory, majesty, dominion, and power,  
Before all time, and now, and forever-  
more. Amen.

In this beautiful way this letter, dealing with tempestuous times and deadly errors, ends. We see no longer the false teacher, the fatal error, the devastating justice of God bringing penalty; we have a vision of God only; a vision fitted to comfort the distressed, to awe the wicked, to inspire with fresh courage the faithful.

#### NOTE I.

**THE LOVE FEASTS.** There are but two New Testament ordinances resting on divine command—baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the first century, without any divine command, but prompted by a desire to show their true brotherly love, they established the love feast. It was held in connection with the Supper, but forming no part of it. The term love feast occurs here only in the New Testament, but in 1 Cor. 11 we have a description of it when observed in a perverted way. It was intended to be a social meal, in

which the church-members would take part. Very soon corruption destroyed its power. It became an occasion for feasting, for the creation and manifesting of social ranks within the church. In time they became entertainments for the rich. In Alexandria, in spite of the protest of Clement, the flute, the harp, the lyre, made the occasion one of mere entertainment. In other places the rich retired altogether from the love feasts, and the institution became a kind of poorhouse institution. In A. D. 112, when Ignatius wrote his epistle, the love feast was yet united to the Supper. When Justin Martyr wrote his "First Apology" (A. D. 140), the love feast had become separated from the Supper. In 391 the Council of Carthage decreed that the Supper should be taken while fasting, which involved, of necessity, the absolute and permanent separation of the two. After the close of the fourth century they entirely disappeared. Some German Baptist churches have something akin to these old-time feasts, a simple meal of which the members partake, the design being to unite the church-members into one true family life. It is needful, however, jealously to guard everything in and about the church lest it become an occasion of weakness, and be invested with something of a sacred character. As baptism became to many a means of regeneration, and the Lord's Supper became a sacrifice, so the love feast became an agency for disintegrating the oneness of the church, and introducing feasting and sensuality. There is a danger that even good institutions may be perverted into agencies for evil. Compare comment on 1 Cor. 11 : 21.

#### NOTE II.

**RELATION OF JUDE TO THE BOOK OF ENOCH.** The prophecy of Enoch in ver. 15 agrees in the main with a passage found in the book of Enoch. This work was known only by fragments, for centuries. In 1773 Bruce, the explorer, found an entire copy of the work in Abyssinia in an Ethiopic translation. It was translated and became the property of the world in 1821. Opinions vary widely as to the age of the book. Dorner attributes it to the first century after Christ. Dillmann,

who edited the work, places it in the first century before Christ, making it current before the days of the New Testament. If it was not written until the first century after Christ, then the passage in this letter cannot be a quotation from the book; but, on the other hand, the book may have quoted from the letter. That the statements in the letter and in the book of Enoch are almost parallel to each other is evident when the two passages are placed side by side.

Farrar contends earnestly that Jude quotes from this apocryphal book, but without thereby declaring the trustworthiness of the entire book, but himself doubtless accepting parts of the book as trustworthy. Tertullian alone of the early church teachers advocated the book as worthy of being placed alongside of the canonical writers. Plummer thinks it possible, though not probable, that both Jude and the book of Enoch made use of old-time traditions coming down to them and accepted as trustworthy, believing them to be genuine prophecies of Enoch. He thinks that Jude may have quoted from the book, even if he recognized the general apocryphal character of the work, but accepting this passage as a genuine prophecy. He, with other writers, holds that Jude might be inspired, and yet quote from the book while in ignorance of its apocryphal character. It would be difficult to hold this view and at the same time give any force to the teachings and promises of Christ in reference to a divine guidance. (See John 16:13.) In the conflict of opinions, it is possible to maintain the following statements: (1) It has not been proved to the satisfaction of all scholars that the book was in existence before the time of Christ. Gieseiler, Wieseler, and Volkmar maintain that it is a composition of the first century. (2) It cannot be proved that both the letter and the book do not quote from a preceding and trustworthy tradition. (3) There is nothing in the passage in Jude or in the book that cannot be sustained by plain teachings of the Old Testament. There is absolutely nothing new in this passage, but the one statement that it was a prophecy of Enoch. (4) If it should be proved, in any way, that the pas-

sage is a quotation from the book, it cannot be proved that it was not a trustworthy tradition that found its way into a book in many respects unworthy of confidence. (5) A quotation of a true statement, even from a heathen author, is not in conflict with the custom of other inspired writers. Paul quotes from heathen poetry with approval (*Acts 17:28*). Of the book of Enoch in its entirety, it may be said that it belongs to that class of writings which were produced in large numbers in the decaying days of Judaism, concerning which Paul speaks as old wives' fables (*1 Tim. 4:7*).

### NOTE III.

**THE TEACHINGS OF THIS LETTER CONCERNING SIN.** 1. **ITS MANIFOLD FORMS.** Few writings in so short a compass have more allusions to sin in its practical outcome. Nowhere defining sin or treating it in a formal way as Paul and John do, to some extent, it yet reveals sin as working its way into life in many forms. Especially does the writer describe sins in their grosser and more outbreaking forms. Like James, the author treats sin and piety on their practical side. It turns the grace of God into licentiousness (ver. 4); leads to a denial of Christ's lordship (ver. 4); leads to abominable sins (ver. 7); to unnatural sins (ver. 8); sets at naught authority and rails at the higher orders of being (ver. 8); contributes to the excesses of wickedness (ver. 10); to hatred and murder (ver. 11); to a wrong-doing for the sake of hire (ver. 11); causes rebellion against recognized authority (ver. 11); creates ungodliness (ver. 15); makes murmurers and complainers (ver. 16); makes lustful lives (ver. 16, 18); leads to pride and favoritism (ver. 16); induces mockery and divisions in the church (ver. 19); takes away the presence of the Spirit and makes an animal life (ver. 19).

2. **THE PENALTY OF SIN.** Jude is a messenger of doom for the persistently ungodly. Sometimes the penalty comes in the present life as in the case of Sodom. It assuredly will come in time. God's justice and God's mercy dwell side by side in this letter. The moral universe is built up on the plan of righteousness; sin unforgiven must be sin punished. He reveals a great

white throne for the ungodly, a throne of grace for the believer. He declares that sin leads to condemnation (ver. 4); destruction comes to the disobedient (ver. 5); the wicked will be kept under darkness, will suffer eternal fire, will inherit the blackness of darkness forever (ver. 6, 7, 13); judgment will come on them for their ungodliness (ver. 15); they will be separated from God's love, cannot look for the mercy of the Saviour, will not inherit eternal life, will not dwell in the presence of God, will not own eternal joy (ver. 21, 24, 25). He reveals God as a God of holiness, of righteousness, of inflexible justice; a God who sees the heart, who has no fellowship with sin; who, at the same time, has mercy in store for the suppliant, and delights to keep men even from the stumbling of life.

#### NOTE IV.

**JUDE'S TREATMENT OF ERROR.** Jude sent out words that were like a flame of fire in denouncing all uncleanness. He made no compromise with falsehood or false teachers. He denounced openly the teachings that took away the foundations from religion and morality alike. To him the words of the Old Testament Scriptures and of the apostles were the standards of right teaching and believing. At the same time he exhibits great tenderness in dealing with persons led astray, with the weak in the faith, with doubting Christians. Sometimes persons are led astray more by intellectual misconceptions than by badness of heart. Jude urges considerateness, discrimination in dealing with errorists; wholesale denunciation, a bitterness of spirit, a lack of judiciousness may fix a person more deeply in his error. Conviction, tenderness of spirit, a love for the truth, and tact are needful in dealing with perverted teachings.

#### NOTE V.

**GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN'S FREE AGENCY.** There is a peril that God's purposes shall be held in so exclusive and one-sided way that a modified fatalism shall prevail and no room be found for man's freedom. High Calvinism, as illustrated in the old school Baptists, is one extreme; on the other hand, some theological

systems emphasize man's freedom in such a way as to eliminate largely God's sovereignty. The universe demands an intelligent and holy God who has plans, a Father wise and controlling things in the interests of his kingdom, and at the same time men who are not machines, but consciously free, governed by motives. The letter of Jude presents, in a balanced way, both sides of this belief. In ver. 21 believers are urged "to keep themselves in the love of God." It is a salvation, not of simple almighty, but through watchcare. In ver. 24 is the affirmation of God's sovereignty, his keeping power; either half of this teaching, taken by itself, becomes a practical falsehood; taken together they form a large and necessary and comforting teaching.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. What the Christian has received of God's spiritual blessings is small compared with the full measure that God has in store. It is a great mistake when the Christian life is largest at the first, shriveling instead of growing (Heb. 5:12; ver. 1, 2).
2. Indifference to the teachings of the gospel is the mark of a sluggish life. A so-called liberality, which consists in holding lightly the teachings of Christ, is against Christ, who is the truth (ver. 3).
3. Holy teachings ought to lead to holy living. Anything that condones to unclean or selfish living, to the denial of Jesus Christ, to forgetfulness of the moral law, cannot be from God (ver. 4).
4. A good beginning may make a bad ending. A good beginning needs a good continuance. An open Red Sea may be followed by a grave in the wilderness (ver. 5).
5. Sin everywhere leads to disaster. A sin even in heaven among the angels brought destruction and death to them, for whom God provided no redemption (ver. 6).
6. The great day ought to be a source of alarm to the ungodly. It has a promise of punishment only (ver. 7).
7. The flesh gives an open door to temptation, and is a source of peril to the soul. Fleshy lusts war against the soul (1 Peter

2:11). The body needs to be kept under (1 Cor. 9:27; ver. 7).

8. God's moral laws are undeviating in their results. The same God who smote Sodom, who sent the deluge, who destroyed the angels, will not to-day look lightly upon sin. What a man or angel sows that shall he reap (ver. 8).

9. An ungoverned tongue soon becomes an ungovernable tongue. The habit of censoriousness, of fault-finding, of condemnation grows by use; we should judge ourselves severely, others in moderation (ver. 9).

10. It is a growing habit of this age to speak in a light and trifling way about Satan. Pictures are made of Satan that laughter may be created. How different is the serious and earnest tone of the New Testament writers! He is a being to be feared and guarded against, full of evil, the god of this world (ver. 10).

11. It is possible for men, made in God's image, to sink lower than the beasts. To live for to-day only is to live like the animals; to live sensual lives is to go lower than the beasts, for they do not violate the laws made for them (ver. 10).

12. Bad people often live most after they are dead, influencing others to walk in the ways of evil. Every Cain, Balaam, Korah, should be a beacon light to warn us of danger (ver. 11).

13. No persons are so dangerous to others as professing Christians without any spiritual life. It is easier to convert a heathen man than to reclaim an apostate, or one confessing Christ but not knowing the power of a saved life (ver. 12, 13).

14. Christianity centers about Jesus Christ. His first coming established Christianity. His personal presence in heaven secures the salvation of the be-

liever and the increase of his kingdom. His second coming insures a righteous administration of awards and penalties. This coming will be in great power and glory (ver. 14, 15).

15. Men must make their choice between God's will and their own lusts and desires. To be self-willed means selfishness, sinfulness, destruction. A person may be lost as effectively through pride of heart as through sensuality (ver. 16).

16. Arguments may be met by arguments. Mockings, taunts, and sneers can be answered only by patient endurance. It is harder for a Christian to withstand a sneer or ridicule than to suffer losses and persecutions. Satan has many methods of waging his warfare. The Christian has a complete armor furnished him by his God (Eph. 6:10-18; ver. 18, 19).

17. The Christian life is begun at conversion. It is built up gradually through patient continuance in well-doing. As in all departments of life and work, God does nothing apart from the man's own choice and will (ver. 20).

18. The greatest blessing in the world is God's love to us. It devised the way of salvation, sent Jesus as Saviour, promised help, and prepared heaven (ver. 21).

19. The man in doubt needs not so much censure as wise counsel. Timid hearts may be driven into infidelity by unwise condemnation, instead of tender guidance (ver. 22, 23).

20. God in heaven is concerned about each one of his followers. He is concerned about the little things of life, the stumbling as well as the falls. Jesus prayed for Peter that he might not fall. He lifts up his children when they do fall. Both Jude and Luther sing, "A mighty fortress is our God" (ver. 24, 25).

# REVELATION

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ—salutation.*

**1** \*THE Revelation of Jesus Christ,  
  **b** which God gave unto him, to show  
  unto his servants things which **c** must  
  shortly come to pass.

**1** THE Revelation of Jesus Christ,  
  which God gave him, to shew to his  
  servants the things which must shortly  
  come to pass; and he sent and signified  
  through his angel to his servant John;

*a Gal. 1:12.*

*b John 5:20; 8:26.*

*c 4:1.*

## CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have the prologue embracing the title and description of the Revelation (ver. 1-3), the salutation to the seven churches of Asia (ver. 4-8), and a vision of the Lord Jesus in his present glorified state (ver. 9-20). John's Gospel has a prologue, 1: 1-14. The Revelation has a similar introduction. This is incidental evidence that the author of both is the same person.

**1-3. THE TITLE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE REVELATION.** We have in this opening passage the original source of the Revelation—God; the divine medium through whom it comes—Jesus Christ; the human agency—John. We have the message defined as a Revelation, an unfolding, an uncovering of things otherwise hidden. John testifies of three things—the word of God, the testimony of Jesus, and of things seen by him. A threefold blessing is given. The revelation is concerning things soon to come to pass.

**1. Revelation (*apokalypse*)** means an uncovering of things hidden. Only here is this word found in this book. In the Epistles we have teaching; in the Gospels we have a life presented; here we have a revealing of the future. It reveals by means of symbols and figures which are thought of as intelligible to the reader. The author implies that his book will be made more plain and impressive by reason of this peculiar method of revelation. It is not meant to be mysterious to darken the future, but to throw light upon it.

It is a revelation of Jesus Christ; that is, not concerning Christ so much as from Jesus Christ. As this revelation is concerning the church, the progress and destiny of Christ's cause on the earth, it is fitting that Christ should give it. He is the founder of the church (Matt. 16: 18), the head of the church (Eph. 1: 21). It is his body, he loves it; he, therefore, reveals its difficulties, its course, its triumph. It is a revelation through Christ from God. On earth Jesus revealed what had been given him from the Father (John 6: 16; 14: 10). In the upper life where he has fuller knowledge (Mark 13: 32; Phil. 2: 7), the Father is regarded as the final source of knowledge. What God has given to Jesus, he does not withhold from his people. Jesus, in this book, stands joined with the Father as a joint object of worship, not in any way as a creaturely subject (5: 13). Jesus reveals to his servants . . . pass, rather, *even the things which must shortly come to pass.* This expresses the subject of the revelation. It is not concerning a far-distant future, but what is shortly to come to pass. This phrase "must be interpreted here and in 22: 6 relatively to Divine measurements of time" (SWETE). In many places allusion is made to the speediness of the coming (2: 16; 3: 30; 17: 10; 22: 20). At least in the beginning of the events here spoken of they were shortly to come to pass. The book of Revelation is for the counsel, the upbuilding of the Christians of that day. Must expresses the Divine mind that made the things necessary.

**2** And <sup>a</sup> he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: <sup>b</sup> who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things <sup>c</sup> that he saw.

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

**2** who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever <sup>f</sup> things he saw. Happy he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein; for the time is at hand.

*d* 22:16; Acts 12:11.

*e* 6:9; John 19:35; 21:24; 1 Cor. 1:6.

*f* 1 John 1:1-3.

*g* 22:7; Luke 11:28.

*h* Phil. 4:5.

Behind history and providence is a personal God. In Jonah 3:10 we see how the repentance of the people made God's punishment of the city needless and impossible. In 2 Peter 2:8, 9 we see God delaying punishment that repentance may come. In Matt. 24:34 Jesus announces that the sufferings described would soon begin to come upon them; in their full accomplishment they would not come to pass for ages hence. This revelation is of the same kind. Unless the things spoken of would soon come to pass, they would be of no use to that generation. God's unfoldings of the truth are always for the age to which the truth is given. Prophecy is for present use. Mere prediction, that would not ripen for centuries afterward, would stimulate curiosity, but would help no one. Jesus sent the message through his angel (17:1; 19:9) to his servant John. Paul designates himself as a servant of Jesus (Rom. 1:1). The order of the revelation is from the Father, through the Son, through the angel, through John to his servants. A revelation is possible, probable, and reasonable if God is a Father, concerned for us and for his cause, especially if his people are in need of help for to-day and light for the future.

**2. Who bare record, rather, witness.** The *witness* is that which John bears in this book. This witness is of three kinds; the **word of God**, not referring to the person of Christ, the incarnate Word of John 1:1; Rev. 19:13, but to the utterances of God; the **testimony of Jesus** (comp. 22:16), the utterances of a present living Jesus to and for his people; and . . . *saw*, rather, even of all things that he saw. This embraces the utterances of God and Jesus, also the symbolic representations shown to him, expressing God's

purposes. John heard God's words and saw God's symbols. What John saw and heard he recorded for the instruction and guidance of Christ's people. The recorded revelation makes a permanent revelation.

**3.** The worth of the revelation given is shown in this verse. John supposes that this book will be read publicly in Christian assemblies and by the disciples of Christ. He thinks of the person who will read the message in the churches, before the days when printing had scattered the leaves of the Scriptures. **Blessed is he that readeth.** The New Testament writings were read in the churches (1 Thess. 5:27). He places a blessing on the congregation hearing it read, and . . . **prophecy.** "The writer claims for his book that it shall take rank with the prophetic books of the Old Testament. . . . The claim is repeated in 22:7, 10, 18f" (SWETE). The design of the reading and the hearing is that the heart may be touched, and **keep** (Matt. 7:24). Mere intellectual knowledge is worthless. The Scriptures were given for moral upbuilding. The knowledge of the truth may prove a curse, if its teaching is not heeded. **For** shows why there should be a reading and hearing of the message. **The time is at hand** shows an immediateness in the development of the things revealed. They are worthy of diligent attention in the age of John. If they are not entirely fulfilled, they are worthy of the attention of every age until the complete fulfilment comes. To be *at hand* might mean, in God's mind, centuries hence. Evidently here it is a nearness according to human apprehension, the nearness is emphasized.

**4-8. THE SALUTATION.** Naturally follows, as in the Old Testament proph-

**4 JOHN** to the seven churches which are in Asia: <sup>1</sup>Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him <sup>k</sup>which is, and <sup>l</sup>which was, and which is to come; <sup>m</sup>and from the seven Spirits which are before

*i Rom. 1:7.*

*k Ver. 8; Exod. 3:17.*

*l John 1:1.*

**4 John** to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven

*m 4:5; 5:6; Zech. 4:10; 1 Cor. 12:4-13.*

ecies, the announcement of the person who received from God the message for men. So high was the standing of John, especially in Asia Minor, where he made his home, that his name would commend the book and give it authority. His tender concern for them is shown in invoking upon them the blessing of the Triune God.

4. As this book deals much in symbols, after the manner of the Old Testament prophecies (*Jer. 1:1*) the author gives his name. As there were many books of this general kind in the first centuries, dealing in the unfolding of the future, everything depended on the source from which they came. The name of John would carry, among all the disciples of Christ, great weight. **Seven churches.** "The Apocalypse is, in fact, a letter from 1:4 onward, though we are not reminded of the fact till we reach the closing benediction (22:21); it might have borne the title 'To the Seven Churches'" (SWETE). The number seven is used here in a symbolic sense. There were more than seven churches in the province of Asia. Having the center of his work at Ephesus John would know them all intimately and care for all. Colosse and Hierapolis (*Col. 4:13*) were in this province. Throughout the entire book, seven stands for completeness rather than for the actual number. The seven churches named have, therefore, been selected because they were representatives of all the churches of that day, and easy of communication. They were also types of the churches of that age. In writing to the seven, he is virtually writing to all. Whether the condition of these churches, as unfolded from the first to the last, is intended to give the portrait of the churches from that era to the close cannot be decided. **Asia** does not mean the continent of Asia, nor all Asia Minor, but the Pro-consular Province, embracing Phrygia, Mysia, Lydia, Caria, and the islands in the neighboring Ægean Sea. Ram-

say points out that the seven cities named were the best points of communication with the seven districts. In his "Letters to the Seven Churches" Ramsay shows special knowledge of the province of Asia, and gives valuable suggestions for understanding these letters. He bestows his blessing, **grace . . . peace.** This blessing has the Pauline thought in it. God's grace must first come, bringing harmony with God. After grace follows *peace* with God and with man. There can be no peace without a reconciliation. Peace is a child of reconciliation. John invokes peace, Jesus brings peace (*John 14:27*). John indicates the source of the blessing, coming from Him who is a trinity in being. The Father is defined in a threefold way, **which is . . . come**, rather, *who*. This is a paraphrase of the unpronounceable name revealed to Moses (*Exod. 3:14*), written in the Old Testament, Jehovah, and pronounced, LORD, God is, God was; he has the springs of an eternal self-existence within himself. God is to come, alluding to his future, eternal duration. This expression has no reference to the future coming of Jesus. It may be that John's mind was so full of the coming of Jesus that it unconsciously influenced his style in describing the Father. The expression, *He that is to come*, is often used in the New Testament of Christ (*Matt. 10:3; 21:9; John 6:14*). He next mentions the Holy Spirit, **seven Spirits** (*3:1; 4:5; 5:6*). He means the one personal Holy Spirit under the figure of seven spirits, a complete number showing the manifoldness of his work in the heart and in the church and world. Representing, as he now does, the glorified Redeemer, the Spirit carries on a perfect work. John alludes, by anticipation, to the vision in 4:5. There is a visible representation of the Spirit and of the Saviour; but, by necessity, none of the Father.

5. Jesus Christ is mentioned last because it is John's purpose to dwell in

5 his throne; and from Jesus Christ, <sup>*who is*</sup> the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

6 Unto him that loved us, <sup>a</sup> and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; <sup>b</sup> to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds;

5 spirits that are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us, and loosed us from 6 our sins in his blood, and he made us a kingdom, priests to God and his Father; to him be the glory and the 7 might, forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he comes with the clouds; and

<sup>n</sup> Isa. 55 : 4; John 8 : 14; 1 Tim. 6 : 13.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Cor. 15 : 20; Col. 1 : 18.

<sup>p</sup> 11 : 15; 17 : 14; Ps. 72 : 11; Eph. 1 : 20.

<sup>q</sup> 7 : 14; Zech. 13 : 1; John 13 : 8; Exod. 19 : 6.

<sup>r</sup> Exod. 19 : 6.

<sup>s</sup> Heb. 13 : 21; 1 Peter 4 : 11.

<sup>t</sup> Zech. 14 : 5; Acts 1 : 9, 11.

the following verses on him exclusively. It is Jesus who reveals God and who sends the Holy Spirit. He is defined in a threefold way: **faithful witness** (1 Tim. 6 : 13). Jesus was a martyr, but far more. He bore witness to God, to the truth (John 18 : 37). The character here ascribed to Christ is used by John as an indirect appeal in urging them to faithfulness. **The first begotten**, rather, *firstborn*. The allusion is to the Saviour's resurrection (1 Cor. 15 : 20; Col. 1 : 20). **Prince**, rather, *ruler*. (Comp. Matt. 28 : 18; 1 Peter 3 : 22.) On earth, some to whom John wrote had seen Jesus in his humiliation. Now he is seated on the heavenly throne, clothed in glory. **Loved**, rather, *loveth*. It is the unchanged and unchangeable nature of Jesus to love his people (John 13 : 1). The Christian must not look back to a Christ who did love, but up to a Christ who does love. Out of his love comes redemption. **Washed**, rather, *loosed*. Both ideas are employed in the Scriptures, cleansing and freeing from bondage. Matt. 20 : 28; 1 Peter 1 : 18 speak of a purchase, a ransom given to deliver from the bondage of sin. Jesus confers more than pardon of sin, he delivers from its power. **In his own blood** expresses the means by which Jesus delivers us. Through the entire book salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus is prominent. On earth and in heaven the saint will not forget the Redeemer or the means of redemption (5 : 9).

6. The redeemed Christian is a reigning Christian. **Hath made . . . kings and priests**, rather, *a kingdom*. The Christian is a royal man, overcoming all foes and adverse agencies. Great prominence is given in this book to the reigning of the saints

(5 : 10; 20 : 4; 22 : 5). **Priests** expresses their relation to God. In the Old Testament times they could not draw near to God except through a priesthood. Now they may all draw near, even into the holiest of all, since the veil is rent in twain (Matt. 27 : 51). All believers constitute a priesthood. The universal priesthood of the believer is one of the essential features of New Testament Christianity. **Unto God**, rather, *unto his God*. Paul speaks of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1 : 3). There is a close relationship between the saved sinner and his Saviour, they have a common God and Father (John 20 : 17). Such a person is entitled to **glory and dominion**, rather, *the glory and the dominion*. Each pious heart joins in the prayer. The book is designed to show that he will finally receive them.

7. The Christ who had been hidden from men will come again in glory. It is the personal Jesus who will come again. This furnished an important part of Christ's own teaching (Matt. 24). These words are, in fact, founded upon that discourse. **With clouds**, rather, *with the clouds*, is a reminiscence of the Saviour's words (Matt. 24 : 30; comp. Dan. 7 : 13). The coming with clouds refers to the swiftness of his coming, and also implies a coming to judgment. The clouds are a symbol for the trouble and anguish of that day. The tenor of the entire passage is that of punishment and alarm. The coming is not that of one for whom all look with eagerness, and before whom all bow in submission. Rather it is the coming of a judge to meet those who are consciously guilty and alienated in mind. John alone notices in his Gospel the fact that his side was pierced (John 19 : 37). Those

"and every eye shall see him, "and they also which pierced him:" ; and all kindreds of the earth "shall wail because of him" [Zech. 12:10]. 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, <sup>b</sup>the Almighty.

*The vision of Christ.*

9 I JOHN, who also am your brother,

<sup>u</sup> Num. 24:17; Job 19:25-27; Matt. 26:64.

<sup>z</sup> Ver. 11, 17; 21:6; Isa. 44:6; Micah 5:2.

every eye shall see him, and they who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail over him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

who thus pierced him will be utterly overwhelmed to see him returning as supreme judge. All kindreds, rather, *all the tribes*. John is here looking upon a guilty, not a penitent, world. Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth (ver. 5). When guilty Babylon falls (18:9), a wicked world beholding it mourns. When Jesus came at first it was, not to condemn, but to save (John 3:17). When he comes again it will be, not to save the guilty, but to condemn. Shall wail because of him, rather, shall mourn over him. At his presence, at sight of him, men will mourn. Mourning now will bring comfort (Matt. 5:4). Mourning then is the outgrowth of penalty, guilt, despair. Even so, Amen. The same two words, one Greek, one Hebrew, occur together in 2 Cor. 1:20. They form a double confirmation of the certainty of the impending coming with its judgments. The amen is rendered "verily" in its frequent use by Christ (John 3:3).

8. We have here the voice of God the Father, who breaks in upon the thought with the declaration of his own infinite nature. Alpha and Omega, rather, the Alpha and the Omega. The first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet express the eternal nature of God. Omit the beginning and the ending. Generations pass away, he abides forever. The speaker is defined in a threefold way; Lord, that is, Jehovah; the Almighty, because he has all power. As God he is defined in a threefold way as in ver. 4. While speaking expressly of the Father, John has doubtless the Son in mind, as the revelation of the Father. Immediately preceding, John speaks of the redemption of

9 I, John, your brother, and partaker

<sup>x</sup> Zech. 12:10. <sup>y</sup> 6:15-17.

<sup>a</sup> Ver. 4; 4:8. <sup>b</sup> Gen. 17:1.

Jesus, and at once follows a vision of Jesus. The same divine attributes that dwell in the Father dwell in the Son (John 5:19).

SECTION 1. 9-20. THE VISION OF THE SON OF MAN. As John is to bear witness of the testimony of Jesus, fittingly now comes a vision of the Lord himself with his message. It is the first of many visions of the book, laying a foundation for them all. The key that unlocks its meaning will help to explain all. This is the first vision in the book, hence its importance. It reveals a present Christ; without this as a foundation thought the entire book is meaningless. It reveals him in close connection with his churches; he walks among them, to counsel, to warn, to defend them. They are his churches. In his life in heaven he cares for the churches on the earth. There is an evident conflict between the reigning Christ and his foes. He is not now the peaceful Christ, but Christ the warrior king. To him the words of Ps. 45:3-5 may well be applied. This vision furnishes the foundation for the letters to the seven churches, each of which contains some reference to this vision. As Christ and his people are one, it will be understood also that his people will have conflicts to undergo. We may therefore expect the book to be full of conflict between the church and the world, and that Christ and his church will, in the end, achieve a great and final victory; Christ means conquest.

9. I John. The style here is in imitation of Dan. 7:28. Daniel in the Old Testament, and Revelation in the New Testament, have many points of resemblance. Who also . . .

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 10 the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of 11 a trumpet, 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

with you in the affliction, and kingdom, and patience in Jesus, was in the island called Patmos, on account of the word of God and the testimony of 10 Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day; and I heard behind me a great 11 voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the seven churches; to Ephesus, and

c Phil. 1:7; 2 Tim. 1:8. d Rom. 8:17; 2 Thess. 3:5; Heb. 10:12, 13. e 12:11; 20:4.

f 4:1, 2; Ezek. 2:2; Acts 10:10; 2 Cor. 12:1-4. g John 20:26; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2.

h 10:8; Ps. 68:33; Ezek. 1:28. i Jer. 30:2; Hab. 2:2.

**Christ**, rather, *your brother, and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus*. John joins himself with the humblest of his readers as a brother, although an apostle, and the one through whom the revelation comes. (Comp. the brotherhood of Jesus, Heb. 2:11.) It is part of his power that he identifies himself with them. **Partaker** shows that John was, at this time, passing through persecutions. He is writing from an inner experience of their sufferings, described in a threefold way. **Tribulation** involves persecution, loss of property, position, the social ostracism that for centuries was the lot of all Christians. Jesus had foretold this time (John 16:2). **Kingdom and patience which are in Jesus** shows that their sufferings belong to the essence of the Christian life; that Jesus shared in them all; that they, with Jesus, are joint sharers in them now. (Comp. Matt. 25:45; Col. 1:24.) Those who are in the kingdom of Christ must suffer tribulation and bear it bravely. **Was . . . Patmos.** This island, now called Patino or Patmosa, is one of the Sporades in the Icarian Sea, about forty miles southwest of Miletus, a rocky, barren place, twenty-five miles in circumference. The cave is still shown where, according to the tradition, John had his visions. It is implied that he was banished to this place for Christ's sake. According to one tradition, he was sentenced to work in the quarries. Driven away from his friends, Jesus Christ came to him. This book, written by one passing through persecution, to those who also were suffering, has always been a comfort in all subsequent dark times.

**10. John describes the condition under which the vision came. In the Spirit** does not mean that this vision came through the Spirit, or that he was spiritually minded on that day, but that he was in the state described by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2, 3. While meditating, perhaps, on the future of Christ's cause he was caught up into a spiritual ecstasy. (Comp. 1 Kings 18:12; Ezek. 3:12, 14.) While preserving his mental clearness, he was, as it were, outside of his body. **Lord's day.** Jewish believers, at first, worshiped on the Sabbath, and also on the first day of the week. Gradually they came to observe the first day exclusively (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7). Whether John first used this term, in this place, or whether it was an expression current at the time, cannot be known. The expression is used in writings about A. D. 100. The allusion is to the first day of the week. It is the Lord's day—dedicated to him, because Jesus rose on this day, because it testifies of him, because he owns it in a peculiar sense. (See on Mark 16:2.) Fittingly Jesus came to John, in his loneliness, on this sacred day to testify concerning his church and its future. **Heard . . . trumpet.** In his exalted spiritual condition John heard a voice real, clear, loud, like a trumpet sound.

**11. Omit I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and, which are in Asia.** These words are not found in the best MSS. The vision is not for John only, but for the churches of that day. The vision and teachings were to be put in a permanent form, written in a book. They became thus a part of the Scriptures to them. **Ephesus** is first named, being the center of John's labors. They

Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, <sup>k</sup>and unto Laodicea.

12 <sup>l</sup>And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, <sup>m</sup>I saw seven golden candlesticks; <sup>n</sup>and in the midst of the seven candlesticks <sup>o</sup>one like unto the Son of man, <sup>p</sup>clothed with a garment down to the foot, and <sup>q</sup>girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and <sup>r</sup>his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and <sup>s</sup>his eyes were as a flame of fire;

to Smyrna, and to Pergamus, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lamp-stands; and in the midst of the lamp-stands one like<sup>l</sup> the Son of Man, clothed with a garment falling down to his feet, and girded round at the breasts with a golden girdle. But his head and his hairs were white, as white wool, as snow; and his eyes

<sup>k</sup> Col. 4 : 15, 16.

<sup>l</sup> Exod. 3 : 2-6.

<sup>m</sup> Exod. 25 : 37; Zech. 4 : 2.

<sup>n</sup> 2 : 1

<sup>o</sup> Dan. 7 : 13.

<sup>p</sup> Dan. 10 : 5, 6.

<sup>q</sup> Exod. 28 : 6-8.

<sup>r</sup> Dan. 7 : 9.

<sup>s</sup> 2 : 18; Dan. 10 : 6.

<sup>t</sup> Or, a Son.

occur in the order in which a person starting from Ephesus and making a circuit would naturally visit them: **Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos,** rather, *Pergamum*; then inland, **Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea**, due east from Ephesus. The message has a meaning to us also. "He that hath an ear let him hear" (3 : 22). He is to write not only what he hears but what he sees (ver. 19).

**12.** The voice attracts attention from its trumpet-like nature. **Golden candlesticks**, rather, *lampstands*. In the tabernacle and in the temple was a golden lampstand with seven branches (Exod. 25 : 31) standing in the holy place. The Old Testament figure furnished a foundation for this vision. Here the lampstands are distinct from each other. The Jewish commonwealth was one nation, the churches of Christ are distinct organizations. The **seven** here, as in the case of the churches, stands for completeness. These seven lampstands represent the nature of all churches in their ideal, being made of gold; they represent their office, to help in the scattering of the light; they show their relation to each other as distinct; their one common relation to Christ as their guardian and keeper. Ideally the churches are divine in their origin and holy in character. Their real nature, with their defects, falling far short of the divine conception, appears in the two following chapters.

**13.** A vision greater than the lampstands now is seen, **one like unto the Son of man**, rather, *a Son*. The article is omitted in one other New Testament passage (John 5 : 27), where Jesus is evidently meant. John does

not intend merely to say that he saw a human figure, but from the use of this expression, without the article in Dan. 7 : 13 and its constant use in the New Testament with the article, he certainly intends to indicate the person of Jesus. He presents him as glorified, yet as one with us in having a human nature. Every part of his person and clothing has a symbolic meaning. **Clothed with a garment down to the foot** indicates his dignity, and perhaps also his priestly character (Dan. 10 : 5; Lev. 16 : 4). **Girt about the paps**, rather, *breasts*—not at the waist, shows that he is engaged in the active service of the upper sanctuary. Jesus is an ever-living intercessor, our heavenly high priest (Heb. 7 : 25).

**14.** His eternal duration and the majesty and splendor of his character, are shown in his whiteness of head and hair. **White...snow**, rather, *white as white wool—white as snow*. With us whiteness of hair implies age and venerableness. In Dan. 7 : 9 is a vision of the ancient of days, God the Father. In the New Testament we see God revealed through Christ. Eternity with God does not weaken his powers. Jesus is eternal in duration, supremely holy in character, full of an indescribable majesty of person. His intuitive, penetrating, omniscient knowledge is shown by his **eyes**. Nothing is hidden from him. The *eyes* see, the **flame of fire** burns up, consumes, the evil that is discovered. On the mount of Transfiguration John saw the person of Jesus, white and glistering (Luke 9 : 29). As an artistic figure to be portrayed on canvas, the burning eye would not be beautiful, but as a moral conception, considered by the mind only, it is im-

15 <sup>t</sup>and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and <sup>u</sup>his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 <sup>x</sup>And he had in his right hand seven stars: and <sup>v</sup>out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: <sup>w</sup>and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 <sup>y</sup>And <sup>z</sup>when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And <sup>b</sup>he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear

15 were as a flame of fire; and his feet like burnished brass, as if it were glowing in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went forth a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as 17 the sun shining in his power. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand on

<sup>t</sup> Ezek. 1 : 7; Dan. 10 : 6.

<sup>u</sup> Ezek. 43 : 2.

<sup>x</sup> 2 : 1; 3 : 1.

<sup>y</sup> Isa. 49 : 2; Eph. 6 : 17.

<sup>z</sup> 10 : 1; Mal. 4 : 2; Matt. 17 : 2; Acts 26 : 13.

<sup>a</sup> Ezek. 1 : 28; Dan. 10 : 17.

<sup>b</sup> Dan. 8 : 18; 10 : 10, 12.

pressive. On earth the eye of Jesus pierced the thoughts of men; how much more in the glorified state! The same representation of Christ occurs when he comes forth in conquest as a man of war in 19 : 11, 12.

**15.** His kingly power is expressed in this passage. His feet are like unto fine brass... furnace, rather, burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace. They are fitted to tread upon the foe and consume them in anger. The brass is shining from its being refined, perhaps white from heat. The voice is majestic, loud, alarming, like the beating of the ocean wave. (Comp. the trumpet voice of ver. 10.) His voice as Saviour is tender, he will not break the bruised reed (Matt. 12 : 20). On earth he could utter terrible woes (Matt. 23), so now, in the upper life, he can speak words that will overwhelm the enemy.

"He is clothed in a garment that indicates priestly functions, but the other attributes assigned to him are rather those of royalty. His white hair shining like wool or snow, signifying that in him are hid all the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom; eyes whose burning glances penetrate through the secrets of men's inmost hearts; his feet, glowing as in the white heat of a furnace, ready to consume the enemies on whom he treads; the two-edged sword going out of his mouth, a figure of the judicial and destroying power of the Word of God; the face shining like the tropical sun, from whose deadly rays man and beast alike flee for shelter; the voice, powerful as the surf booming on the shores of Patmos—these are marks of royal majesty and power. It is Jesus whom John sees, but Jesus the high priest of his people and king of all the earth" (H. C.

VEDDER, D. D., in "The Watchman," July 12, 1906).

**16.** In his right hand, outstretched, were seven stars. The right hand could defend and guard. Jesus speaks of the believer in his own hand and in the hand of his Father (John 10 : 28, 29). The seven is again the complete number. The kingly Christ is represented as having in his mouth a two-edged sword. The words of Jesus will be like a sword that will smite the foe utterly. (Comp. 2 Thess. 2 : 8; Heb. 4 : 12.) No one can escape its power and destruction. The words of Jesus are not empty words or threats, but they accomplish his purpose. Who can successfully fight against the strong Son of God? Who can be defeated if he fights for them? The face, the countenance, was like the sun shining in its transcendent brightness—unclouded. John chose the brightest conceivable thing to represent the appearance of the glorified Lord.

**17, 18.** If the image of Jesus here portrayed were outwardly represented it would be unattractive, but if looked upon with the mind only it is significant and full of meaning. Jesus is the eternal, all-searching, majestic, priestly king, whose words are conquests, whose foot treads down the enemy. I fell at his feet as dead. John had lain on his bosom when on the earth. But the vision of the glorified Lord, appearing in splendor, the conqueror of death, the king of the rulers of the earth, overwhelmed him, lowly and sinful as he was (Dnu. 7 : 17; 10 : 8, 9, 15). There is always with God, glory, tenderness, and grace (Isa. 6 : 15; Luke 24 : 37). The touch of Jesus brought reassurance. His words are a reminiscence of his earthly ministry: Fear not (Matt.

18 not; <sup>c</sup>I am the first and the last: <sup>d</sup>I am he that liveth, <sup>e</sup>and was dead; and, behold, <sup>f</sup>I am alive for evermore, Amen; and <sup>g</sup>I have the keys of hell and 19 of death. Write <sup>h</sup>the things which thou hast seen, <sup>i</sup>and the things which are, <sup>k</sup>and the things which shall be 20 hereafter; the mystery <sup>l</sup>of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, <sup>m</sup>and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are <sup>n</sup>the angels of the seven churches: and <sup>o</sup>the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

18 me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I became dead, and behold I am alive forevermore; and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after 20 these; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest on my right hand, and the seven golden lamp-stands. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches; and the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 8.      <sup>d</sup> Rom. 6:9; Heb. 7:25.      <sup>e</sup> John 19:30; 1 Cor. 15:3.

<sup>f</sup> 4:9; 5:14.      <sup>g</sup> 3:7; Ps. 68:20; Isa. 22:22; Acts 2:31.      <sup>h</sup> Ver. 14, etc.

<sup>i</sup> 2:1, etc.      <sup>k</sup> 4:1, etc.      <sup>l</sup> Ver. 16.      <sup>m</sup> Ver. 12.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. 5:15; Phil. 2:15.      <sup>n</sup> 2:1; Mal. 2:7.

17:7). The saved sinner need not be afraid of Jesus. Jesus makes a three-fold declaration, revealing his own eternal existence, his triumph over death, and his consequent power over death. **I am . . . liveth**, rather, *I am the first and the last and the Living One*. He proclaims his possession of life in and through himself in like manner as Jehovah in the Old Testament (Isa. 43:10-13). He therefore had no beginning of days, and will have no end of days. **Was dead**, rather, *became*. There is the implication that he voluntarily subjected himself to death (John 10:18). In joyous tones he claims now an ever-living life. He is the Living One; not only one who lives, but he has the springs of life in himself. He calls attention to it: **behold**. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was a wonderful event. It secured the salvation of the soul, it established his divinity, and gave a foundation for his universal rulership. Omit **Amen**. Jesus has **the keys of hell and of death**, rather, *of death and of Hades*. No one will enter into the grave unless Jesus opens the door. (Comp. John 5:28.) Those in the unseen life are safe, because he has the keys. They will come out at the resurrection, for he will open the door. To have the keys of a house is to have the control of the house. Hades stands here, not for hell, the place of the punishment of the wicked, but the realm of the dead. It is usually personified in this book, as in 6:8. Jesus claims a sovereignty over his saints, over the wicked waiting to be

punished, over the dead of all classes. This power he secured through his own sufferings and death. A distinction must be made between Gehenna, rendered hell, the abode of the finally impenitent, and hades, often wrongly rendered hell in the Common version. Hades means the realm of the dead.

**19. Write**, rather, *write therefore*. Because Christ is such a person as here described, so exalted, it is fitting that all should thus recognize him. Jesus desires to be known in his real character. He becomes a permanent revelation when the vision is written. Three things are contained in the direction to write what he had seen. First, the vision of the Son of man, revealing a knowledge of his incarnation, his resurrection, his consequent ascension and glorification. Secondly, the things which are, perhaps alluding to the message to the churches expressing their present state. Thirdly, the things which shall be, the vision beginning with chap. 4. Not all the future is revealed, but only a part, which concerns the progress of his kingdom; not as history in all its details, but in outlines, and expressed in symbol.

**20. Mystery** means that which is in itself hidden from human sight and knowledge, but is revealed through God's Spirit to God's children. (See Eph. 3:3-12.) Jesus himself acts as interpreter here. He aims not to bewilder, but to make clear. The **stars** are the **angels** of the churches. The **lampstands** are the churches. They

are **golden**, signifying their exalted character. They exist for the one purpose of helping Christ to throw light into the world. When on earth Jesus explained his first parable that thus they might get the clue for understanding all the parables (Matt. 13: 18-24). He has the same spirit of helpfulness in his life on high.

**NOTE 1. HADES.** This word means that which is unseen, referring to the world of spirits. It occurs ten times in the New Testament (Matt. 11: 23; 16: 18; Luke 1: 15; 16: 23; Acts 2: 27, 31; Rev. 1: 8; 6: 8; 20: 13, 14). In the Received version it is rendered, hell, grave; in the Revised version it is uniformly rendered hades. It is the translation of the Hebrew term *sheol*, used in the Old Testament sixty-five times. The parable in Luke 16: 19-31, taken in connection with Luke 23: 43 and Acts 2: 24-32, shows that hades was a world into which the souls of all entered, having two divisions. One was that of joy and comfort, paradise; the other of misery and penalty, separated by an impassable gulf. Hades nowhere can be rendered grave, nor does it correspond with hell, gehenna, regarded as the place of final punishment. Gehenna, rightly rendered hell, occurs in the New Testament twelve times (Matt. 5: 22, 29, 30; 10: 28; 18: 9; 23: 15, 23; Mark 9: 43, 45, 47; Luke 12: 5; James 3: 6). This describes the place where the wicked, with body and soul united, after the judgment will suffer everlasting punishment. The ungodly at present are in hades, but they are not yet in hell, the place of final punishment. The New Testament teaches, however, that the souls of believers enter at once into heaven to be with Christ. (See John 17: 24; 2 Cor. 5: 6, 7; Phil. 1: 23.) That the souls of believers enter immediately into God's presence is implied in Rev. 6: 9-11; 7: 9-17. It may be conceded that even believers do not receive their full blessedness until after the resurrection. The souls of unbelievers are under penalty until the day of judgment (2 Peter 2: 9); while the souls of the righteous are with Christ. Until the resurrection of Christ hades appears to have been the common home of all the dead; since that time the wicked alone are in hades,

the righteous are with Christ. Compare note on Luke 16: 22 and Practical Remark 25.

**NOTE 2. THE MEANING OF THE TERM ANGEL OF THE CHURCH.** The angel of each church is addressed. Three views are held as to the meaning of this term. Whoever he was or whatever it means, the angel represents the church.

1. The most commonly received view is that it refers to the bishop or chief pastor of the church. In Haggai (2: 19) the prophet, and in Malachi (2: 7) the priest is the angel of Jehovah. But against this view are two objections. First, it assumes that, at the writing of these messages, of the plurality of elders in the church, one had gained such a leadership that he was recognized as the bishop. Of this there is no proof. Each church had a plurality of elders, called bishops from the Greek point of view (Phil. 1: 1), known as elders from the Hebrew point of view. Among these was a parity of authority. In the Epistles of Paul, there is no trace of the rise of the bishop or chief pastor. The letter to the Philippian church puts the pastors on an equality (Phil. 1: 1). In the pastoral Epistles, written several years later, there is yet no hint of the precedence of one elder over the others. It is against the teaching and facts contained in the Acts and the Pauline Epistles to concede thus early the rise of the bishop as the governing idea in the church. It is an undoubted fact that in the second century there arose the beginning of that vast fabric of church government embracing the idea of the local bishop in each church, then the bishop of a province, the system culminating at last in the papacy. But of this system we find no trace in the New Testament. It is probable that there was in the synagogue service an inferior officer known as the angel or messenger. But it was an inferior position, having nothing whatever of the authority here possessed. Secondly, the angel and the church are so thoroughly identified in these letters that it is impossible to conceive of the angel being a human bishop or chief pastor. In the condemnatory messages to Sardis and Laodicea is it possible to think that the pastor and the church had precisely

the same fault and in the same degree, so that both are equally blameworthy? In the declining devotion of the church at Ephesus, is it possible that the devotion in the pastor and people declined equally at the same time? The commendations and condemnations of Jesus pass interchangeably from one to the other, showing that both must be in some sense one. In the message to the church at Ephesus, the angel is charged with having left the first love. Naturally the penalty would be a removal from his position. But the penalty comes upon the church; the church itself must perish unless there come back a quickened spiritual life. This is a decisive proof that, in some way, the angel and the church are inseparably wrought into each other's life, so that what is true of the one is true of the other. But nowhere is it true that prophet and people, or pastor and church, are so identified, and so reflect the spiritual life of the other, that the word of praise or censure may be bestowed equally upon either.

2. Another view is that the angel is a superhuman being, having a watch-care over the church. The word angel is generally used of a superhuman being in this book after the first three chapters. But it seems unfitting thus to identify a perfect angel with the imperfect church life here described. An angel can scarcely be called upon to repent (2 : 5). There is no proof whatever that the early Christians regarded their churches as under angelic control. Jesus speaks of angels who have an especial care for little children (See note on Matt. 18 : 10, in Clark's "Peoples Commentary"). Daniel speaks (10 : 15) of the prince of Persia, where the reference is, perhaps, to a higher order of beings exercising control over the national life. Undoubtedly angels may have a watchcare over Christ's saints on the earth, inasmuch as he is the head of the church. But there is no warrant for believing that the angel here spoken of is a superhuman person.

3. The angel of the church is the spirit, the genius, the spiritual characteristic of the church personified. It does not differ from the church itself. Every church has its own peculiar, distinguishing characteristic; this constituted its angel. In this book, all

through, each object described has its angel. The fire has its angel, its own nature representing it, showing what it is (14 : 8); the abyss has its angel (9 : 11); the wind has its angel, differing in nothing from the wind itself (6 : 1). In like manner the churches have their angels, each church having its own angel. And this explains how the messages, the words of censure, of counsel, of praise, can be addressed equally to the angel or to the church. If the love of the angel declines (2 : 4), it is the love of the church that is declining. And, therefore, Jesus declares that if the angel repent not, the church itself must perish. If the angel is faithful the church is faithful; if the angel is overcome by the world, the church is, at the same time, overcome by the world. There is here a twofold description of the church. It is described under the figure of a star and a lampstand. Both of them suggest the light-giving power of the church. The star shines in the firmament. The lampstand, in the tabernacle and in the temple, shone in a more hidden way. The double figure employed emphasizes the truth taught, the church must be pure and light giving. The angel of the church is the church itself viewed in its essence and spirit, revealing itself to the gaze of the ascended Christ, and to the gaze of the onlooker upon the earth. The seven churches represent the one, universal church of Christ upon the earth. The seven angels represent, in a symbolic way, the genius and distinguishing spirit of this one universal church. While favoring the preceding view Swete adds: "But in this symbolical book the angel of a church may be simply an expression for its prevailing spirit and thus be identical with the church itself."

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The Revelation is not given to satisfy curiosity, but to develop and encourage the church. It was designed to be useful to the Christians of the first age, when they were, of necessity, unlearned and plain people. It implies an unfolding of God's will in such a way as to be comprehended by them. God tenderly accommodates his revelation to the capacity of his people. God does not reveal all the

future, which would be a hindrance to us. He makes known some things that they may be a help to us (ver. 1).

2. Jesus is one with the Father (John 10:30), but there is a certain subordination in position whereby the Father gives to the Son. We may not understand completely the inner relations of the God-head, but we may notice certain facts. Both are concerned for the welfare of the churches on the earth. Through Jesus we know God, his nature and will (ver. 1).

3. The highest honor is to be a servant of Jesus. Paul, James, and Jude, all delighted to call themselves the bondmen of Jesus. It is the highest freedom to enter willingly into subjection to Christ (ver. 1).

4. John wrote the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, in his earthly ministry, in the Gospels. He writes the after ministry of Jesus in the Revelation. God and Jesus are still active workers in and for the church. The unseen Christ is an ever-active Christ (ver. 2).

5. In former centuries the Scriptures were scarce and costly. Now every one may read for himself. With the larger knowledge comes a larger responsibility. There is blessing for all those, in all ages, who search the Scriptures, know God's will that it may be done. A teachable mind and a teaching Spirit can make the word plain (ver. 3).

6. With God a thousand years are but as one day. Having eternity for his working time God need not hasten. What is long to us, is but a moment to God. We should not be impatient when God seemingly delays (ver. 3).

7. God the Father can be seen only through Jesus the revealer. The Holy Spirit, being pure spirit, can be seen only in a symbolic way. The ever-living God and the Holy Spirit, perfect in his nature and operations, alone can best give grace and peace (ver. 4).

8. Jesus Christ is the center of Christianity. He witnesses for God; he has power over death; he is a ruler with complete power. A ruling Christ could overcome his enemies; an interceding Christ is a helper for his friends (ver. 13).

9. Christ is spotless in nature and ma-

jestic in his person. His majesty of person is the outward representation of the moral grandeur of his character. The chief beauty in Christ is his moral love-line (ver. 14, 15).

10. Jesus is the creator of peace in the soul and in the world. But he has a sword. His words reveal the heart—convict, reprove, condemn. He is patient, but he can and will destroy the obdurate in heart. It is a mistake to think of Jesus as only the tender-hearted. He is judge, ruler, conqueror (ver. 16).

11. The splendor of Christ makes him an overpowering Christ. The weakness and sinfulness of human nature combine to prostrate man in his presence. The tenderness of Christ is united to his grandeur. On earth and in heaven he cares for his weak but true disciples (ver. 17).

12. Death seemed to overcome Jesus. It held him in its prison for a time. Coming out of it, he destroyed it. He now has complete power over death and all the regions of the unseen beyond. No Christian need be afraid to die. Persecution, killing the Christian, cannot drive a man away from the personal presence and watchcare of Jesus (ver. 18).

13. The past, the present, the future—all equally lie open before the mind of Jesus. A God who can reveal the future must be a God indeed. God reveals the future only so far as it concerns his kingdom—more in principles than in detail. Prophecy is not the writing of history beforehand (ver. 19).

14. Jesus holds the stars, the representations of the churches, in his right hand for protection. Christ shines through the churches; they should shine for him. They are of use only when they are of gold, and when they are of service to Christ (ver. 20).

## CHAPTER II.

The two following chapters give the messages to the seven churches. Jesus stands among them, not with a critical eye, but with the eye of a holy and watchful Saviour and guardian. The message is adapted to each one, to its peculiar conditions and surroundings. This chapter contains the letters to the

*Epistles to the seven churches of Asia.*

- 2** UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, <sup>a</sup> who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.  
**2** <sup>b</sup>I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, <sup>c</sup>and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and <sup>d</sup>thou hast tried them <sup>e</sup>which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast

*p* 1 : 16, 20.      *q* 1 : 13; Matt. 28 : 20.  
*s* Ver. 6.      *t* 1 John 4 : 1.

*r* Ver. 13; Ps. 1 : 6; 139 : 1-4; 2 Tim. 2 : 19.  
*u* 2 Cor. 11 : 13; 2 Peter 2 : 1.

churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira.

**1-7. LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS.** These letters, as noticed above, are constructed in a symmetrical way. The letters and the book itself reveal much of care in the formation.

**1.** On the term, **angel**, see note at the end of chap. I. On the theory that the angel was the chief pastor some find an allusion to Timothy who labored here, or to some one appointed by Timothy or John.

Ephesus was the most important city in the province. Swete, in his critical commentary, says: "Ephesus stands first among the cities to which addresses are sent. Thither the messenger from Patmos would sail by an easy course of sixty miles. Moreover, on many grounds, this city took first rank. . . Its commercial prosperity kept pace with its political importance. The great road which brought the trade of the East from the Euphrates to the Ægean reached the sea at Ephesus. . . The city was a hotbed of cults and superstitions, a meeting-place of East and West, where Greeks, Romans, Asiatics, jostled one another in the streets." See Clark's "Peoples Commentary" on Acts 19 : 1, 19, 27, 35, 38. The name of John is inseparably associated, in all tradition, with the pastorate of this church in his later years. It was the scene of Paul's labors for three years (Acts 20 : 31). We have also the letter written to this church, the most lofty and spiritual of all Paul's writings. It was a wealthy and prosperous city, the seat of the worship of Diana, whose temple was one of the world's seven wonders. It had been a center of large religious activity. Here had labored Timothy,

Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos, and Tychicus. Jesus, the sender of the message, is described in words taken from 1 : 13, 16. He **holds**, stronger than the word **had** in 1 : 16, **the stars**. He guides, protects, and punishes with his strong right hand. It is a word of comfort for tempted people, the assertion of his sovereignty. Jesus watches over, not simply Ephesus, but over all the churches. He holds its star and all the stars in his hand. (Comp. Isa. 49 : 16; John 10 : 28.) He is not only in the midst of the churches (1 : 13), he walks in the midst of them. He is an active Christ, superintending, counseling, reproofing, warning. In the message to the first church is the expression of the Lord's relation to all the churches as that of guardianship and watchcare.

**2.** Jesus here declares his penetrating and comprehensive knowledge. **I know thy works.** This is a general characteristic of all the letters, his thorough knowledge. This is the foundation for his condemnation, reproof, affording a means of counsel and help. **Works** refers not simply to the outward movements of the church, but to the entire life—inner and outer. **Labour**, rather, *toil*, a stronger word. There had been not only activity, but an intensive and thorough service. **Patience** denotes endurance under the opposing ills and hindrances that beset them. Jesus commends them for two reasons. First, he approves their separateness from moral evil. **Thou canst not . . . evil**, rather, *evil men*. There was a persistent love for holiness, good things, and good men. The church did not hate bad men, but it could not tolerate them in membership, nor condone their evil deeds. Secondly, he approves their love for right

3 found them liars: \* 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. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and \* repent, and do the first works: <sup>b</sup> or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, 6 except thou repent. But this thou

3 didst find them liars; and thou hast patience, and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou 5 didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else, I am coming to thee, and will remove thy lamp-stand out of its place, if thou 6 repent not. But this thou hast, that

*x* Matt. 10:22; Phil. 1:29.

*y* Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:3.

*z* Jer. 2:2; Matt. 24:12.

*a* Ezek. 18:30-32.

*b* Matt. 21:41, 43.

thinking and teaching, orthodoxy in doctrine. Paul declared that false teachers would rise up among them (*Acts 20:29*). These false teachers claiming, perhaps, to have seen Jesus (*Acts 1:21, 22*), or preaching other doctrines than those recognized (*Gal. 1:8*), were tried by standards given in the words of Christ and the apostles. Jesus taught that bad fruits indicate a bad heart (*Matt. 7:16*). John declared that a denial of Christ coming in the flesh was a mark of the antichrist (*1 John 4:1, 2*). Trying their claims they found them false teachers. Their orthodoxy met the approval of Jesus. All untruthfulness in teaching will, in time, produce incorrectness in life.

3. The commendation is continued. **And hast borne...fainted**, rather, *And thou hast patience, and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary*. Four qualities are here mentioned with approval. There is a steadfastness in working and suffering that has grown into a settled principle, shown by the present tense; there was a bearing, as of a load, all duties; this was done from a personal love for the Lord Jesus, **my name's sake**; it was a trial that did not beget weariness, there was a persistent freshness in service. The yoke of Jesus made an easy service.

4, 5. A rebuke follows. It is a mark of the divine tenderness that the praise is first given, then the reproof. The general charge is, **I have somewhat against thee**, rather, *I have this against thee*. The Authorized version creates the impression that there was only a slight deviation from the church's right attitude. It was rather a grievous fault. **Thy first love** indicates a brightness

at the beginning of the Christian life that was now dimmed. Zeal had taken the place of love. Jesus takes cognizance, not of the quantity but of the quality of the work done, depending on the motive. The exhortation embraces three things: a remembrance of the former love and life, a repentance, a recovery of the lost life. It was not an apostasy like that described in *Heb. 6:6*, but a grievous backsliding (*Jer. 2:13*). There must be, as in Peter's case, a conversion (*Luke 22:32*). The first love, if watched over, will preserve the renewed life, and the old life taken up again will keep the love fresh. The life and the love will mutually affect each other. A threat follows, **I will come...quickly**, rather, *I am coming*. If there is no repentance the church itself will be destroyed. It would naturally be destroyed by the slow death that would follow the decay of the spiritual life. Some judgments, such as pestilence or persecution, might hasten the death of the church, the removal of the lampstand. In this passage is a proof that the angel of the church is not different from the church itself, but is the church itself under another aspect. If the angel does not repent, the result will be, not that the angel will be removed, but that the lampstand will be removed. The church for a long time retained its vitality. It finally fell, in the fourteenth century, under the power of the Turks. A traveler visiting the place in 1860 found only three nominal Christians. The threat of Christ may have helped to restore the former spiritual condition, and keep its light shining, to some extent, for centuries.

6. A return is again made to con-

hast, that thou hatest the deeds of <sup>c</sup> the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 <sup>d</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give <sup>e</sup> to eat of <sup>f</sup> 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 <sup>g</sup> the

thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 15.      <sup>d</sup> Ver. 11; 3:6, 13; Matt. 11:15; Luke 8:8.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Kings 20:11; Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 6:10-12; James 1:12; 1 John 5:4, 5.

<sup>f</sup> 22:2, 14.      <sup>g</sup> Gen. 2:9.      <sup>h</sup> 1:8, 17, 18.

damnation. The **Nicolaitanes**, rather, *Nicolaitans*, are spoken of as a sect or party hated by the Ephesian Christians as well as by Christ himself. The errorists may have been loved and sought after for right ends, but their evil teachings and deeds were hated. There is no doubt as to the character of this sect, spoken of in ver. 16 also. It was an organized licentiousness, holding that the moral law did not apply to Christians, or that the flesh, being evil in itself, the Christian need not try to subdue it. Men with such corrupt beliefs appear in many places in the New Testament (Rom. 2:8; 2 Peter 2:14; Jude 4). John frequently alludes to schisms and factions (1 John 2:18-24; 4:1-6). Two theories exist as to the origin of the name. One is that it arose from Nicolas, one of the seven chosen in Acts 6. Another theory is that no sect of this name really existed, at this time, but that Nicolas, a Greek word, and Balaam, a Hebrew word, having the same meaning, "destroyer of the people," it came to pass that the entire organized licentious influence was called by this name, Nicolaitanism. According to this theory there was an actually existing sensual party, corrupt and corrupting, and figuratively it is called the party of Nicolas, or Balaam. This last theory is more in accord with the general symbolic character of the entire book. In the church at Pergamos or Pergamum there were followers of Balaam (2:14). In the church of Thyatira Jezebel teaches (2:20).

7. Now follows a call to hear and a promise. We have a reminiscence in the words, **He that . . . hear** (Matt. 11:15). The Saviour's teachings are worthy of the utmost attention. **Spirit** refers to the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke to John

when in the Spirit (1:10). The Lord Jesus speaks, but he speaks through the Spirit (John 16:7). The entire Trinity is concerned in the spiritual welfare and upbuilding of the church. The **overcometh** shows that the Christian life and the church life is a struggle. There are foes, a conflict, a helper, a splendid issue through Christ's help. There was a fall in the first Eden (Gen. 2:9). There is here a promise of restoration in a new Eden (22:2, 14, 19). The promised life is life in all its fulness. The first Adam fell, the last Adam gives life (1 Cor. 16:45). **To eat of the tree of life** is to share in the blessedness of Christ, his salvation and glory. **In the midst of the paradise of God**, rather, *in the paradise of God*. Paradise is a Persian word, meaning a park. It is used in Luke 23:43 of the place of the blessed dead. (See Clark's "Peoples Commentary," 2 Cor. 12:4.) The reward promised, the eating of the fruit of blessedness, stands in contrast with the peril of being overcome, that of eating things offered to idols (ver. 14), an expression indicating licentious living. True living in Ephesus involves, at the end, a blessed living with God in his abode. A keeping of the first love, living an overcoming life, will make Ephesus ripe into paradise.

#### 8-11. LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA.

8. For definition of **angel**, see note above. On the theory that the term angel refers to the chief pastor, the early writers thought that the allusion might be to Polycarp. Ignatius, visiting Smyrna A. D. 108, states that he was then pastor. Tertullian, about A. D. 200, states that John placed Polycarp in charge of the church at Smyrna. On this theory, however, the allusion could not be to Polycarp if the letter

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 10 are the synagogue of Satan. " Fear none of those things which thou shalt*

first and the last, who became dead, 9 and lived again. I know thy affliction, and thy poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is

*i Exod. 3 : 7; Heb. 4 : 15.      k 2 Cor. 6 : 10; James 2 : 5.      l Isa. 48 : 1, 2; Rom. 2 : 17, 28, 29; 9 : 6.  
m 3 : 9; John 8 : 44.      n Matt. 10 : 22, 26, 28; Luke 12 : 4-7.*

was written before A. D. 70. Smyrna is now a large city, with two hundred thousand inhabitants, largely nominal Christians. The description of the Saviour is taken from the vision in 1 : 18. There is always a congruity between the aspect of the Saviour presented and the condition of the church to which it is sent. The Smyrna church was passing through a period of disaster and persecution, and yet deeper distress was about to come. Reviling would give way to the prison and possible death. For such a time as this Jesus reveals himself as one who himself had suffered and died, and had overcome death. Jesus has in himself endless life; therefore since he and his people are one, they cannot be destroyed, but will live on. The Smyrnean Christians may perhaps be killed, but Jesus is that one who was **dead and is alive**, rather, *lived again*. They, in like manner, will live again.

**9.** Here are the words of commendation. Omit **I know thy works**, found in all the letters except in this and the following message. **Tribulation** embraces the persecutions of all kinds that came upon them—the loss of property, the loss of social position, the danger to personal safety. **Poverty**, doubtless to be taken in a literal sense, would naturally follow persecution. The Christians sometimes suffered the loss of property (Heb. 10 : 34). Then too, as a rule, the Christians were usually of the poorer classes (1 Cor. 1 : 26). **Rich** expresses their spiritual condition. Outwardly poor, inwardly they were rich. They were rich in character, rich in hope, in the unseen reward, in treasure laid up in heaven (Matt. 6 : 20; James 2 : 5). The **blasphemy** may refer to the calumny heaped upon the name of the Lord Jesus, which was in effect, though, a calumny heaped upon God. It may

be restricted to a reviling of the Christians, charging them with crimes of which they were not guilty, charging them also with being traitors to the Jewish faith, or with following a man who had suffered an ignominious death. The opposers here were not heathen, but Jews, as in 1 Thess. 2 : 14. In the persecution in A. D. 115, when Polycarp was destroyed, the Jews were especially bitter, demanding his death. They were real Jews by birth and belief, but in persecuting the followers of the Messiah they were, in effect, denying their right to be called Jews. Paul distinguishes between Jews according to the flesh and Jews according to the spirit (Rom. 2 : 29). To be a Jew was to have an honorable name. Abraham and Jesus were Jews. To persecute a follower of Jesus who is himself the revelation of God, the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures, was to bring dishonor upon the worthy name of Jew. **And are not** shows that they have forfeited their right to wear this name. These Jews met in their appointed worship in the synagogue, forming, as they thought, a congregation of Jehovah (Num. 27 : 17). But in God's sight it was a synagogue of Satan, in that Satan controlled their thoughts in reference to Jesus. Not all seeming worship and prayer are real worship and prayer acceptable to God. Jesus had uttered similar words in his earthly ministry (John 8 : 44). Synagogue is used once of the Christian place of worship (James 2 : 2). Jesus promised to meet with his people, assembled in his name (Matt. 18 : 20). Satan also meets with his people.

**10.** Words of help are found in this passage. **Fear . . . suffer**, rather, *Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer*. Jesus announces sufferings yet to come. He does not promise exemption from persecution, but he prom-

- 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.

*o* 1 Peter 1 : 6, 7.

*p* 12 : 11; Matt. 24 : 13; Acts 20 : 24.

*q* James 1 : 12; 1 Peter 5 : 4.

*r* Ver. 7, 17; 13 : 9.

*s* 20 : 6, 14; 21 : 8; Matt. 10 : 28.

*t* 1 : 16; 19 : 15, 21; Heb. 4 : 12.

ises his help to bear them in a victorious way. The reference is apparently to a trial just about to come upon them, in what year it is not known. The devil worked through men. False charges would beget the prison. The tried refers not so much to God's purpose in testing them to show the reality of their faith, as to the devil's purpose in tempting them that they might abandon their faith. Through God's upholding care the persecution might result in a blessing to the church. Satan, all through the New Testament, is a very real person, active, powerful, malicious, but to be resisted by the believer (1 Peter 5 : 9), and to be overcome finally (20 : 3). Having great influence, so that he is called the god of this world (2 Cor. 4 : 4), he is not omnipotent. The time of the persecution is ten days, which is not to be interpreted as ten literal days or ten years (as though a day stands for a year) or ten persecutions about to come upon them. It stands here for a short and definite period of time. That it is a short time is in harmony with the generally consolatory spirit of the passage. (Comp. 1 Peter 1 : 6.) There is a limit seen by the Saviour's mind, and fixed by the divine purpose. The one spirit needed by them is faithfulness, not implying that they had been unfaithful. The limit is unto death, the spirit that will not turn aside even if death should be the result of their steadfastness. Jesus endured unto death in his faithful witnessing. The Christ who suffered, met reviling, died and lived again, is fitted to grant large encouragement to the saints at Smyrna. He knows the meaning of reproach, dan-

about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye will have affliction ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamus write: These things says he who has the sharp two-edged sword.

ger, abandonment by friends, death, resurrection, the life in glory. A crown of life, rather, the crown, will be given to the faithful, enduring witness for Christ. The crown will be eternal life itself in all its fulness, a life that is life indeed (1 Tim. 6 : 19, R. V.). It is elsewhere called a crown of glory (1 Peter 5 : 4); a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4 : 8). As John's writings are full of allusions to the Old Testament Scriptures, it is probable that he refers, not to the civic crown, but to the kingly crown. The redeemed will be kings (5 : 12).

11. The call to hear, as in ver. 7, is the appeal to listen to the ascended Christ. The promise accords with the special dangers confronting them. They might be hurt by the power of persecution and death, but the second death, described in 20 : 14, would not hurt them. They would share in eternal life, not in eternal death. The second death is not annihilation (Matt. 25 : 46), but a permanent and conscious separation from the joys of God's presence (Rom. 6 : 23). The second death will hurt the soul; the first death is but momentary, and usually not involving much suffering. He that is born twice will die but once; he that is born only once will die twice. The sufferings of the present may be the better endured and the sooner forgotten if the joys of the future be kept well in mind. Jesus, in this way, sustained his own life (Heb. 12 : 2).

12-17. THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS.

12. Pergamos, rather, Pergamum, is to-day a city of twenty thousand people, situated on the Aegean Sea. It

- 13 <sup>u</sup> I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even <sup>x</sup> 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 <sup>y</sup> Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, <sup>z</sup> to eat things sacrificed unto idols, <sup>a</sup> and to commit
- 13 I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there men holding the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the sons of Israel, to eat things offered to

<sup>u</sup> Ver. 2, 9, 19, 23; 3 : 1, 8, 15.<sup>x</sup> Ver. 9.<sup>y</sup> Num. 24 : 14; 25 : 1-3; 31 : 16; 2 Peter 2 : 15; Jude 11.<sup>z</sup> Ver. 20; Acts 15 : 29; 1 Cor. 8 : 4-13; 10 : 19, 20.<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. 6 : 13, etc.

was famed for its large and valuable library, for its worship of Æsculapius, the god of medicine, the remains of whose temple are still found near the city. Here also were other noted temples. It was noted for its manufacture of parchment, which obtained its name from this city. Several thousand of the present population are nominal Christians. Jesus is described as a warrior Christ, the description being taken from 1 : 16. He is fittingly so described because he plans to make war upon a church indifferent to the maintenance of right teaching. His sword is for use, not for ornament. Jesus is tender in heart to the penitent (Matt. 12 : 20). He can be severe in all holy severity to the ungodly and indifferent.

**13.** Here are words of praise. Omit **I know thy works. Satan's seat,** rather, *Satan's throne*. As God has his throne (5 : 1), so Satan, as if in mockery, also has his throne, his place of authority. For some reason that is not stated Pergamos is designated as the center of Satan's influence and power. Satan worked in Smyrna (2 : 10), but here he has his throne. It was a head center of the influences and the men opposing Christianity. Its wealth, its culture, its social life, its attractive worship, may have contributed to the dangers to the Christian life. The church, as a whole, was faithful, devoted, holy, as is shown in the two things praised—holding **my name**, in the present; not denying **my faith**, in the past. Jesus, in glory, had noted the death of a faithful **martyr**, rather, **witness**, *Antipas*. Of him we know nothing but this. His biography is summed up in one sentence. He was

a witness for Christ, he was faithful, he was used by Christ. A tradition declaring him to be the chief pastor at Pergamos can be traced back to the fifth or sixth century, but it is not capable of proof. Fanciful attempts have been made to identify him with different names, as Timothy. By some the name is taken, not as that of a real person, but as indicating his character. It is safest to regard the name as that of a real man who, at a definite time, lived and died with his face toward Christ. In such a place, and at such a time, many would naturally, like Peter, turn their backs upon the faith. The Pergamos Christians were faithful even in a place where Satan dwelt. Christ also came to dwell there, enabling his people even then to live faithful lives. A martyr is a witness sealing his testimony with his blood. In the Greek, *martyr* means witness.

**14.** Jesus now passes to reproof. **A few things against thee** indicates that the main life of the church was right, meeting the approval of Jesus. The blameworthy feature of the church life was the tolerance of evil persons in the membership. The church must stand as a defense of orthodoxy in teaching and holiness in living. The church at Corinth was blamed by Paul for keeping an unclean man in the membership (1 Cor. 5 : 5). The church must be considerate toward the teachable, even if they are in error (Jude 22). Corrupt men, in teaching or in life, must be on the outside of the church. The historic allusion is found in Num. 25 and 31 : 16. In the first passage is noted the lewdness between Israel and Moab. In the second the uncleanness is ascribed to the counsel given by

15 fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine <sup>b</sup> of the Nicolaitans; which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and <sup>c</sup> will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 <sup>d</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give <sup>e</sup> to eat of the hidden <sup>f</sup>manna; and will give him a white stone, and in

15 idols, and to commit fornication. Thus thou also hast men holding the teaching of the Nicolaitans, in like manner.

16 Repent therefore; or else, I am coming to thee quickly, and will make war with them with the sword of my

17 mouth. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and

*b* Ver. 6.

*c* Ver. 12; Isa. 11 : 4; 2 Thess. 2 : 8.

*d* Ver. 7, 11, 29.

*e* Ps. 36 : 8.

*f* Exod. 16 : 33, 34; John 6 : 31-35, 49-51.

Balaam to Balak, king of Moab. Two charges are brought against Balaam, the incitement to engage in idolatrous worship, and the consequent participation in uncleanness. The same Balaam-like spirit prevailed in Pergamos. The mingling in social life and idolatrous worship would lead to a relapse into idolatry on the part of those rescued from heathenism, and would insensibly lead to fornication usually connected with idolatrous worship. In India, today, licentiousness is an organized part of the worship in some temples. A little leaven like this might soon corrupt an entire church.

15. This verse is naturally joined, in thought, to the preceding. **So hast . . . hate**, rather, *So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner*. We are not to infer that two distinct evil sects are here tolerated; two descriptions are given of one sect. The sense is, as Balaam, in the olden times, taught the people to engage in idolatry and to commit uncleanness, so also do the Nicolaitans. The old error is reproduced in a new form, under a new name. That the church, in its corporate capacity, had not been won over to uncleanness is evident from the words used. Jesus does not charge this upon the church, as such, but upon some in the church. There was a church within the church; this inner body was faithful.

16. A call to repent is made. A holy Christ demands a holy church. The angel, that is the entire church, must repent. The evil-doers in the church must repent of their wickedness. The clean part of the church must repent for tolerating the grievous error. He praised Ephesus for soundness of teaching; he condemns Per-

gamos for lacking in the steadfast defense of the truth. Looseness in the maintenance of the truth comes from a lack of conviction and from a lack of Scripture knowledge. A distinction is drawn between the faithful and the unfaithful part of the church. This is shown by the expressions, **come unto thee and fight against them**. The true words of Christ's mouth are against the words of the false teachers' mouths.

17. The overcoming man, the one not eating at the idolatrous worship (*1 Cor. 10 : 21*), will have given him to eat the **hidden manna**, the bread of God (*John 6 : 32*). The expression carries the mind back to the wonderful supply in the desert, to the pot of manna in the holy of holies (*Exod. 16 : 34*; *Heb. 9 : 4*). The faithful man will be a real high priest, having access even to the holiest place, and partaking of the manna stored there. These men in Pergamos, tried and conquering, would share in God's hidden treasures, entering where God dwells, having fellowship with him. The *overcoming* may be mainly the entering into heaven's final blessedness, but there must be a constant, daily overcoming life. The partaking of the manna will give strength in the daily struggles of life. God never places a duty without giving the manna, the strength. The **white stone** must refer to some Old Testament event, for the entire book is cast in a Hebrew mold. *White*, in general, is the symbol of purity, joy, blessedness. (*See 3 : 5; 7 : 9; 14 : 14; 19 : 11, 14; 20 : 11.*) The mention of the manna, with the entrance into the holiest place, suggests another allusion to the high priest, the sacred stone worn by him in the breastplate, on which was engraved the sacred name of Jehovah.

the stone <sup>a</sup> a new name written, <sup>b</sup> which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

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

**19** <sup>e</sup>I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; <sup>f</sup>and the last to be more than the first.

on the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.

**18** And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet are like burnished brass. I know thy works, and thy love, and faith, and ministry, and patience; and thy last works more

*g* 3:12; Isa. 62:2; Rom. 8:14-17. *h* 10:12; Ps. 25:14; Matt. 11:25-27; 1 Cor. 2:14.  
*i* Ps. 2:7; Rom. 1:4. *k* 1:14, 15. *l* Ver. 2. *m* Job 17:9; Prov. 4:18.

This stone and this sacred name could be seen by no human eye except that of the one receiving it—the high priest. Every believer as a priest stands in a personal relation to God, has entrance into the holiest of all, the immediate presence of God, has fellowship with him in thought and life, shares in God's character. God was manifested in the olden time by the name Jehovah. He is revealed now in the person of Jesus. This name Jesus becomes the badge and the glory of all his accepted people. His name is called upon them (James 2:7). Written on the stone is, not the name of the believer, but the new name of Christ (3:12), by which is meant that some new and more glorious manifestation of Christ is given. The name stands for the person, reveals the person. A new name means a new revelation of a person. For the significance of new see 3:12; 5:9; 21:1, 5. The promise is a very gracious one: "I will make him a priest, he shall have access into God's immediate presence, he shall be clothed with a priest's dress. I will make communications of myself to him."

**18-29. LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA.** The three churches, whose letters have been examined, have about them a spiritual life and character that is not found in the four whose letters are yet to be studied. The spirit of worldliness has already gotten a large hold upon these churches.

**18.** Thyatira is a city of Asia Minor on the northern border of Lydia, near the road from Pergamos to Sardis. The river—Lycus—flows near it. The modern city, Al Hissar, has about twenty thousand inhabitants. Jesus,

the sender of the message, is described as the Son of God, having previously been revealed as the Son of man (1:18). As he reveals himself in this message he is the ruling and conquering Christ (ver. 27). The title is drawn from Ps. 2, to which several allusions are made in this letter. Jesus is not man alone, nor God alone, but the God-man in the one person. He is further described in terms taken from 1:14, 15. Who . . . brass, rather, *burnished brass*. There is a fitness between the description here given and the character of his work, searching out and punishing evil. The flaming eyes pierce through the heart and consume the evil, while the feet of brass crush down all opposition. He rules as one clothed with almightyess. At the close of the letter the enemies are broken in pieces.

**19.** The Saviour finds many things to commend. The eyes stand for his omniscience. I know thy works. The knowledge is thorough, personal, all-comprehensive, intuitive. He commends five things: thy charity, rather, love; faith; service, rather, ministry; patience, rather, endurance; last works more than the first, which declares a growing Christian life. Ephesus had a waning love (2:4). He notices first the inner life, love and faith; then the outward life, to which they give birth, the ministry and endurance. The real inner life must always create an outward spiritual life. High praise is given for a faithful service. There was no stagnation in the life as in Heb. 5:12, nor a shrinkage as in 2 Peter 2:20, but growth.

**20.** Alongside of the praise is the blame. The eyes of fire recognize a

- 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman <sup>a</sup>Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants <sup>b</sup>to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.
- 21 And I gave her space <sup>c</sup>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 re-

- 20 than the first. But I have against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess; and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things offered to idols.
- 21 And I gave her time to repeat; and she is not willing to repent of her 22 fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her, into great affliction, if they

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings 16 : 31 ; 21 : 25 ; 2 Kings 9 : 7.      <sup>b</sup> Ver. 14 ; Exod. 34 : 15 ; Acts 15 : 20, 29 ; 1 Cor. 10 : 19, 20.  
<sup>c</sup> p. 9 : 20 ; Rom. 2 : 4, 5 ; 9 : 22 ; 2 Peter 3 : 9.

large element of guilt. **Notwithstanding**, rather, *But I have this against thee*. A definite charge is brought; when Jesus rebukes he rebukes openly. Here also, as in the church at Pergamos (2 : 14, 15), was a tolerance of false teaching and false living. **Sufferest** shows that the church permitted, endured false teaching. In this respect it was in contrast with the Ephesian church which would not tolerate impure teaching (2 : 2). The church, like Christ, must carry a sword, not for persecution, but for expulsion from membership (1 Cor. 5 : 5). At Ephesus was a declining love but an earnest orthodoxy; here is a growing love but a weak maintenance of the truth. The historical reference to Jezebel is found in 1 Kings 16 : 13. She was the wife of Ahab, a daughter of the king of Sidon; a heathen woman, bitterly hostile to the worship of Jehovah; a persecutor of Elijah. Through her influence upon Ahab the true worship of Jehovah was almost obliterated. It is taught in 2 Kings 9 : 22 that she was guilty of inciting to adulteries, which may be taken in a figurative sense as meaning inciting to idolatries, and also in its literal sense, as urging to uncleanness. She was also, perhaps, a priestess of this impure worship. It is not to be inferred that there was a person named Jezebel in Thyatira, at this time, but that some person in the spirit of this bad woman was here exerting her influence, laying claims to prophecy, an inspiration from on high. Some ancient MSS, as also the R. V. in the Margin read, thy wife, instead of **that woman**. It cannot be known who she was, but an actual person must be understood, representing also a party under her influence. The first convert in Europe was Lydia, from

Thyatira (Acts 16 : 14, 15). It cannot be known whether she had anything to do with the formation of this church, or had any influence in it, or contributed to any predominant influence of woman in it. The terms Balaam, Nicolaitans, and Jezebel, all refer substantially to one sect, licentious in its nature, throwing aside the restraints of the moral law, regarding it as not applicable to Christians. They represented some form of gnosticism, denying that Jesus had a real manhood (1 John 4 : 3), and therefore denying that man, in his fleshly nature, is called upon to be holy.

**21.** Jesus refers to the personal efforts, made by him, to win the false teacher to the ways of truth. **I gave . . . not**, rather, *I gave her time that she should repent, and she willett not to repent of her fornication*. The patience of Jesus in not punishing, and in bringing moral influences to bear upon her through his Spirit and through the teachings of the true teachers in Thyatira, was for her repentance (Rom. 2 : 4; 2 Peter 3 : 9). She misinterpreted his patience, so that she became fixed in her fornications (Eccles. 8 : 1). A sinful human will may convert God's offered blessings into curses.

**22. Behold** calls attention to his holiness and power that will bring fitting penalty. **I will cast**, rather, *I do, or, I am about to cast*, implies a speedy punishment. Jesus threatens to bring upon her and her followers a great punishment under the figure of a **bed**, not of pleasure, but of sickness and torture. The **commit adultery with her** refers to the spiritual adultery into which they had been led by her (Ezek. 23 : 37), implying also the uncleanness connected with impure worship. Spiritual and sensual defilement

23 pent of their deeds : and I will kill her children with death. <sup>q</sup> And all the churches shall know that <sup>r</sup>I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts. And <sup>s</sup>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 <sup>t</sup>the depths of Satan, as they speak ;

<sup>q</sup> Deut. 13 : 11.

<sup>r</sup> Jer. 11 : 20; 17 : 10; John 2 : 24, 25.

<sup>s</sup> Job 34 : 11; Isa. 3 : 10, 11.

<sup>t</sup> 2 Cor. 2 : 11; Eph. 6 : 11, 12; 2 Thess. 2 : 9-12.

went hand in hand. **Their deeds**, rather, *her works*. They must repent of their own lives that had been corrupted by association with her. The bed of adultery gives way to the bed of penalty and retribution. The first bed Jezebel made ; the latter, the holy and ruling Christ makes. It is also true that Jezebel made her own bed of punishment, for God never punishes in an accidental or fortuitous way. Punishment follows impenitent wickedness.

**23.** The threatening here continues, is closely connected with the preceding verse. The **kill . . . with death**, rather, *pestilence*, as in the Margin, implies a judgment coming upon them. **Her children** does not differ in meaning from the followers and assistants spoken of in the preceding verse. They were her followers in the false teaching ; they were also looked upon as her children because begotten by her, as Paul speaks of Timothy as begotten by him, because by him led into the Christian life (1 Tim. 1 : 2). God has all things under his control, so that he can make pestilence follow false teaching and unholy living. For an Old Testament instance see 1 Cor. 10 : 9; for a New Testament instance of this see 1 Cor. 11 : 30. The punishment here has a twofold meaning ; upon them it would be a just penalty for wrong living ; it would also have a constraining and disciplinary effect upon all the churches. They would see, in the light of the penalty, that God makes a distinction between truth and unrighteousness ; the wavering in mind would be aided in resisting temptation ; the bad would be restrained ; the good would be encouraged. **Reins and hearts** embrace the whole of the man's inner life, open to the gaze of the eyes of fire. **All the churches** refers as-

23 repent not of her works. And her children I will kill with death ; and all the churches shall know that I am he who searches reins and hearts : and I will give to you every one according to your works. But to you I say, the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who knew not the deep things of Satan, as they say,

suredly to the seven churches, to all churches everywhere and always, in all likelihood, in so far as these general principles are concerned—that Jesus looks for holiness in his churches, that truth and righteousness must be maintained, that penalty must come, in time, to all violations of Christ's plans for the Christian and the church life. Churches must hold allegiance, not to Confessions of Faith, or the decrees of councils, but to the revealed will of the Lord Jesus. It is noticeable that Jesus passes from the address to the angel to the appeal to the individual members of the church. This is an indication that the angel of the church does not differ from the church itself. The angel of the church is the personified spirit of the church.

**24, 25.** Here are words of counsel in view of the perils and penalties spoken of. Jesus speaks to the faithful part of the church ; for worldliness had come into the church, dividing it into two parts, the Christly part and the worldly part. **But . . . Thyatira**, rather, *But to you, I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira*. The faithful members are spoken of as *the rest*, implying that the worldly spirit had gotten hold of the larger part of the membership. Their faithfulness is shown in this, they had not received *this teaching*. Jezebel and her followers boasted of their knowledge of the deep things of revelation, knowing all the mysteries of the faith (comp. 1 Cor. 2 : 10) in contrast with the simplicity of the faith and the teaching of the Christian teachers. The expression, **as they speak**, refers to their boastings as to their deep knowledge of God and his teachings, but in reality they were **depths of Satan**, masterpieces of Satan's art in seducing men. It must be understood that Jezebel was a mem-

<sup>a</sup>I will put upon you none other burden. But <sup>b</sup>that which ye have already hold fast till I come.  
 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, <sup>c</sup>to him will I "give power over the nations;"  
 27 <sup>a</sup>"and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers" [Ps. 2:8, 9]: even as I received of my Father.  
 28 And I will give him <sup>b</sup>the morning star.

25 I cast on you no other burden; but that which ye have, hold fast until I come. And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall shepherd them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter are dashed in pieces, as I also 28 have received from my Father; and I

<sup>u</sup> Acts 15:28. <sup>x</sup> 1:7; 3:11. <sup>y</sup> Matt. 24:13; John 6:29; Heb. 10:38, 39.

<sup>z</sup> Dan. 7:18; Matt. 19:28. <sup>a</sup> Ps. 2:8, 9; 49:14; Dan. 7:22. <sup>b</sup> 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19.

ber of the church, having made confession of Christ. In reality her life, influence, and teachings were of the Satanic kind. This licentiousness in practice was founded upon a doctrine that seemingly explained and justified it. Satan never lacks the ingenuity to find a justification for the greatest excesses in doctrine and conduct. Jesus, who is the truth itself, must be loved both as to his person, his conduct, and his teachings. **Burden** here means injunction or command. (Comp. the same word in the Greek, Acts 15:28, 29.) Jesus gives the counsel that they abide where they are, in faithful Christian teaching and living. They must hold fast to their present sound beliefs and holy living, not allowing themselves to be seduced by false teachings (Phil. 3:16). The struggle would end in time; **till I come**, meaning the second and final coming, or such a coming in judgment upon Jezebel as will, through her removal, make life easier for them by removing their temptations. To hold fast is as essential as to begin the life in a right way. No beliefs or manner of life should be discarded until something better has been secured. No person or church should ever turn the back upon Christ, truth, or continuance in well-doing.

**26, 27.** There were great struggles, there is now a great promise. The one who overcometh is defined in a twofold way. He is one who does Christ's works—works like Christ's, works done through his help (John 14:12). He is also one who keeps on unto the end, not led astray by falsity in teaching or life. Jezebel, while nominally a Christian, was in reality introducing heathen teachings and practices into the church. This suggests the reference to the Messiah's dealings with all heathenish op-

position. The quotation is taken, not from this book, as is usually the case, but from Ps. 2:9. The faithful man shall be joined with Christ in his triumph over all opposition. The **power over the nations**, rather, **authority**, which the Son received from the Father, that same authority the Son confers upon all believers by joining them with himself in the acknowledged final victory over opposition of all kinds. All things will in the end be under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25). Jesus, with his might, will crush Jezebel. In like manner, **with a rod of iron**, he will subdue all enemies. **Shall . . . be broken**, rather, **are broken**. For the present, Jezebel may seemingly triumph over Christ and his cause, but at the last, all opposition will be like the **shivers** of the broken pottery. Jesus will not be a defeated Christ. **Even as I**, rather, *as I also*. **Received of my Father** introduces us into the interior relations of the Godhead. In something the same manner Jesus joins his people with himself, and confers upon them kingly privileges. What was originally given to him alone (Ps. 2:9) is given by him to his own. The destruction of Jezebel is a prophecy and assurance that all enemies will be destroyed (Luke 22:29). The scepter of Jesus is now one of mercy to the penitent (Heb. 4:15, 16). It will, in time, be a rod of iron for crushing his enemies. Whether the shepherd's crook shall help us, or the rod of iron shall crush us, depends on the choice of the heart. In so far as the Lord breaks down the error of false teachers, this is done through the wisdom of his true teachers. But judgments from God are symbolized by the feet of brass and the rod of iron.

**28.** In 22:16 Jesus says: "I am

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

29 will give him the morning star. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

c Ver. 7.

the bright and morning star." In 1 Peter 2 : 19 the apostle speaks of the day star, the harbinger of the brightness of day. In Dan. 12 : 3 the faithful man shines out as the star. Jesus compares himself to the brightness of the morning star, ushering in the full light. He here identifies himself, the morning star, with his people. He will share with them his own glory by conferring upon them authority, the blessedness of reigning with him. In a highly poetical way he teaches again the thoughts of ver. 27. The star, in the Old Testament, is the symbol of royalty (Num. 24 : 17). The faithful Christian will shine out with the brilliancy of the glorified Lord.

**29.** In the first group of three churches the call stands before the promise. In the last four letters, constituting a second group, the call to the churches stands last. In this is an indication that, in some respect, there is a difference between the two groups. The spiritual standing of the second group is far lower than that in the first group.

**NOTE UPON THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES.** 1. The letters are all constructed in the same general way, consisting of seven parts: (1) The name of the church addressed; (2) Some special aspect of the Saviour who sends the letter; (3) An account of the spiritual condition of the church; (4) Words of commendation or reproof; (5) Exhortation to the church according to its condition; (6) Promise to him that overcometh; (7) A call to every one to hear. In the first three letters the parts 6 and 7 change places.

2. The aspect of the Saviour in each of the letters is taken from the description of the Son of man in the vision in chap. 1. The delineation of the Saviour in the vision is repeated, in a fuller manner, in the letters. Thus in the letter to the church at Ephesus the portrait of the Saviour is taken from 1 : 12, 13, 16: "He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in

the midst of the seven golden lampstands."

3. Some allusions in the letter can be explained only by a reference to the afterparts of the book. Thus the tree of life (2 : 7); the second death (2 : 11) can be understood only by taking the book as a whole.

4. There is a universal character attributed to the seven churches. This is evident from the number itself, seven, which always stands for completeness. At this time there were other churches in the province of Asia, not included in the messages. It is evident also from the oft-recurring phrase, the call to listen to the voice of the Spirit speaking to the churches (2 : 7). The design of these letters extends beyond these specific churches. While each church letter contains a true portrayal of each one of the churches, it has also a wider meaning, whereby the seven churches represent the universal church. The seven stands for all.

5. There is also within the seven churches a distinction whereby the first three form one group, the second four another group. In the first group there is a finer spiritual life than in the second group. There are imperfections manifest in the church life, but there has been no surrender to the world. The churches are not perfect, but they are not faithless. There is a trueness to the divine conception of the church life in the first group that is wanting in the second. In the last four the world begins to gain power over the churches. It is only a remnant, a small part of the church, that is true to Christ. It cannot be decided whether it is the divine intention thus to show that in this manner the churches will gradually lose their Christly character. There is a wonderful and sad descent from Ephesus to Laodicea.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Jesus, unseen by us, is at the right hand of God, having all authority (1 Peter 3 : 22), for the sake of his cause on earth (ver. 1).

2. The Christian and the church are to test the claims of all teachers and all teachings. Nothing can be true that undermines the authority of Christ, or denies the reality of salvation through him, or does not imitate the example set by him (ver. 2).

3. The entire Christian life is love for a person, doing things for his sake, repeating his life in ours, and striving to please him (ver. 3, 4).

4. To decline in love is to decline in the entire life. To please Christ there must not be the outward life only, but the right spirit. The question of Jesus to Peter was: "Do you love me?" (ver. 4).

5. A dying church is a sad sight. A church must die that loses its love and will not do Christ's work. Jesus has great use for a shining and holy church, but an unholy and useless church is a great hindrance (ver. 5).

6. God loves all men, but he hates wickedness and all teachings that destroy men. It is an utter falsity that it makes no difference what a man believes. Beliefs save or destroy. A man is what he really believes (ver. 6).

7. Jesus makes a new Eden for his people, and gives not only an endless existence, but an ever-blessed life. Life means far more than a mere existence (ver. 7).

8. Because Jesus died and lives again he is able to sympathize with the suffering and dying. His resurrection gives him the consciousness of power. He is, therefore, able to rescue his own people from the power of the grave (ver. 8).

9. Poverty, shame, reviling are often the heritage of Christ's people; but poverty may be a school for the development of a rich character. No one may covet persecutions and martyrdoms, but when they come they must be patiently borne and blessings will come out of them (ver. 9; Matt. 5 : 11).

10. An elegant place of worship, with a fine ritual, may be a synagogue of Satan. The right relation of the heart to Christ is essential to right worship. The Christly heart will make an acceptable worship (ver. 9).

11. There is an unseen evil power warring against us (Eph. 6 : 12). But there is

also an unseen but real Christ working for us (Rom. 8 : 34; Acts 16 : 25, 26). Jesus rewards his servants, not for success, but for fidelity (ver. 10; Matt. 24 : 45; Acts 16 : 25).

12. The ear must be kept open to listen to Jesus. What rests upon the church must rest on each member. The church is nothing apart from the members (ver. 11).

13. Jesus can use his sword for the destruction of his enemies as well as for the defense of his friends. If he condemn, no one may approve. If he approve, no one may condemn. Jesus is not all tenderness, he is justice and holiness also (ver. 12).

14. It was more difficult to live in Pergamos, where Satan's seat was, than in other places. The weakest believer, with God's help, can live an overcoming life even in the worst surroundings. The finest Christians will grow where there are most dangers. But no one may seek perils in order that strength of character may come thereby (ver. 13).

15. Jesus remembers any faithful man like Antipas. One human life stands out in great splendor when its memory is treasured up by Jesus. A faithful life is made up of little things done in a spirit of faithfulness (ver. 13).

16. Jesus dislikes impurity in the church, which is his body. All errors are hurtful. A bad man will live long after he is dead. Balaam had a disastrous influence centuries after his death (ver. 14).

17. God shares his glory with his people so that the believer has access even into the innermost holy place. The believer needs no one to stand between himself and the Saviour. For the daily difficulties there will be the daily supply of manna. In fellowship with Christ is all needful strength (ver. 15-17).

18. Jesus appears as a many-sided Christ. To the penitent he is a tender Saviour. To the impenitent wrong-doer he appears as a kingly Christ prepared to crush out all opposition. Christ will be to us a Christ according to our character (ver. 18).

19. It is more in accord with the nature of Jesus to see the good traits of his people than the bad traits. He praises before

**3** AND unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he <sup>a</sup>that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.

<sup>b</sup>I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, <sup>c</sup>and art dead.

*d* 1 : 4.

*e* 2 : 2.

*f* Eph. 2 : 1; 1 Tim. 5 : 6.

he blames. There are many sides to the Christian character. Jesus notes them all (ver. 19).

20. All Christians and churches are imperfect in the eyes of Christ. It is wicked to teach error, to lead men away from Christ. It is weakness to permit others to teach or do wrong without remonstrance. Weak good men and weak churches hurt Christ's cause (ver. 20).

21. Jesus is patient that men may repent. He came not to destroy, but to save. Jerusalem and Jezebel may resist his appeals and his tears. We should use God's delay, not for abusing his patience, but for salvation and service (ver. 21).

22. God's judgments indicate God's righteousness. The time will come when all will know that God is just and righteous. His seeming delays sometimes obscure right views of God. His penalties are never the result of caprice (ver. 22, 23).

23. There are gradations in badness so that, at times, Satan makes fuller revelations of himself. The bad man may grow worse. This will be true when all good influences of restraint are taken away. No one ever will reach the limit of the badness that may be evolved from a bad heart (ver. 24).

24. Jesus is a reigning king to-day. The humble Christian, walking in faithfulness, will also be a king. He may be trampled upon to-day, but authority will be conferred upon him by Christ. The future belongs to Christ and the Christian (ver. 26).

25. If men fall in with Christ, he will be to them a protecting Shepherd. If men resist Christ, he will be to them a crushing Lord. Jesus speaks of a rod of iron. The tender Christ can be severe (ver. 27).

### CHAPTER III.

This chapter contains the letters to the churches in Sardis (ver. 1-6), Philadelphia (ver. 7-13), and Laodicea (ver.

**3** AND to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he who has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest,

<sup>14-22</sup>). It is unfortunate that these letters are broken into two sections by the chapter division. They form one connected group.

**1-6. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS.** Jesus is described as having the Holy Spirit in his control (ver. 1); the church is almost dead (ver. 1, 2, 4); it is counseled to be watchful (ver. 2, 3); a threat of judgment is made (ver. 3); the overcoming men will be greatly rewarded (ver. 4, 5).

**1.** In this verse is the name of the church addressed, and also its spiritual condition. Sardis, now Sart, was situated on the river Pactolus, the former splendid capital of the kingdom of Lydia, the home of Croesus, fabled for his wealth. It was a famous city long before the days of Christ, retaining its strength into the first century of the Christian era. It was largely destroyed by an earthquake in the first century. It is now a heap of ruins. It was a commercial center, noted for its splendor and power. Jesus is described in words taken from 1 : 4 and 1 : 16. There is, as in all the letters, a harmony between the parts of the description made use of and the spiritual condition of the church. **The seven Spirits** are the one Holy Spirit. In 1 : 4 they are said to belong to God. Here, they are said to belong to Christ. Everywhere, in this book, the deity of Jesus is emphasized. **Hath** shows that the relation of Jesus to the Holy Spirit is one of possession; the Spirit works in his interest. Inasmuch as the church is almost dead, it is fitting that the one having the control of the Spirit, the source of life and holiness, should appeal to them. He alone can revive them. Jesus taught, in his earthly ministry, that he would send the Spirit to do his work (John 16 : 6-14). A second title is here given, **and the seven stars.** The stars are the angels (1 : 20) which under another form, represent the spirit of the churches. Christ, who has the Spirit under his control,

**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. **4** If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee <sup>m</sup>as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon

**2** and thou art dead. Become watchful, and strengthen the remaining things that were about to die; for I have found no works of thine complete before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and keep, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what

*g* 1 Peter 4:7; 5:8.

*h* Col. 3:16; Heb. 3:13; 12:1-3.

*j* Dan. 5:27.

*k* Ver. 11; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13. *l* Matt. 24:42, 43. *m* 1 Thess. 5:2-4.

also has the church for his possession. The churches need not fear that they will lack the ministry, the power, and the blessedness of the Spirit, for both are his. He holds them in his hand (2:1); here a further thought is given, he hath them, owns them. Sardis had a **name**; was well thought of; was perhaps rich and prosperous, sharing in the wealth of the city. **Name** here is equivalent to reputation. There was no tribulation as in Smyrna (2:10); no fierce opposition, no false teaching, no heresy, as in Ephesus (2:2); no licentious living, as in Thyatira (2:20); all was quiet about them, it had a name for orthodoxy, right thinking, but it was in reality destitute of spiritual life. There were ordinances, organization, orthodoxy; but love, and the life which comes from full fellowship with Christ, were wanting. (Comp. 1 Tim. 5:6.) In its own judgment, and in the judgment of others, the church at Sardis was a veritable church of Christ. But, taken as a whole, the church was not alive in Christ. Jesus does not regard baptism and the Lord's Supper and church-membership as saving, otherwise these all would have been spoken of as Christians.

**2.** Here is Christ's counsel, **Be watchful**, rather, *become*. There must be an awakening from spiritual lethargy. It is a frequent New Testament injunction (Matt. 24:42; Rom. 13:11). **The things which remain** refers, in reality, to the persons in whom the spiritual life was not extinct, equivalent to *the rest* of 2:24; those yet somewhat in love with Christ. The remaining spiritual life must be cultivated. In trying to rescue others their own life would be quickened. **Are ready to die**, rather, *were ready*. Looked at from an afterpoint of view, they were regarded as dying, were almost

dead. It cannot be known what effect this injunction had upon them. **For** confirms the justice of the judgment passed upon them. **I have . . . God**, rather, *I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God*. An examination of the life of the church shows that it had fallen far short of its appointed work; none of its work satisfied Jesus. The expression does not mean that it was found not perfect, in an absolute sense, for nothing human is, but that everything was defective—less than ought to be expected from it. It approved itself, others approved it; but the real test of its standing and worth is God's judgment, *before my God*. **My God** shows that Jesus, in passing judgment, is a representative of God the Father; it is, hence, a just judgment. The work of each man and each church, in its collective capacity, is constantly tested by Christ. If a church, to-day, lives a Sardis kind of life, this same judgment is rendered. Every church needs to have a constant vision of the glorified Lord Jesus.

**3.** Counsel and threatening are here united. Three things are enjoined, a remembrance of the former church life, a holding fast that there be no further backsliding, a godly sorrow, and hence a new mind toward God. They must **remember** how they received their first spiritual blessings through repentance, belief, and faithful obedience. They received the word in joy and gladness. In the same way they must again receive God's blessings. The joy and earnestness of their first life should be an incentive to them now. It must **hold fast** (present tense) the little life and love left. A little love is vastly better than no love. It must **repent** (aorist tense, signifying that it must be done at once) instantly of its guilt, and seek spiritual blessings. If

**4** thee. 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 6 his angels. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

**4** hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, because 5 they are worthy. He that overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, 6 and before his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

*n* 1 Kings 19 : 18.    *o* Jude 23.    *p* 4 : 4; 6 : 11; 1 John 3 : 2, 3.    *q* 19 : 8; Isa. 61 : 10; Zech. 3 : 4, 5.  
*r* Exod. 32 : 32, 33.    *s* 20 : 12; Isa. 4 : 3; Dan. 12 : 1; Luke 10 : 20.  
*t* Mal. 3 : 17; Luke 12 : 8.    *u* Ver. 13; 2 : 7.

the warnings are not heeded Jesus will come in judgment speedily and unlooked for. (Comp. the figure of the thief in Matt. 24 : 43; Luke 12 : 39; 1 Thess. 5 : 2, 4.) The coming referred to is not the second and final coming, but an intermediate, yet real, coming in judgment through pestilence (2 : 22) or other visitation. Jesus can send judgments in the life that now is; he assuredly will in the existence beyond. We may not infer that all physical ills are judgments sent from God (John 9 : 3). It is equally unwise to infer that God can send no judgments now, expressive of his will.

**4.** Here the words of praise come after the censure. In Sardis the predominant element in the church was displeasing to Christ. **Thou . . . Sardis**, rather, *But thou hast a few names in Sardis*. But shows the contrast between the many who were dead and the few who were living. Sodom had a few good men; Sardis had a few who were uncontaminated by their surroundings. The expression *in Sardis*, implies that the city was extremely wicked and unfavorable to the Christian life. Jesus knowing all men, knew who those were that lived a true life. On the church register were many names; on the heavenly register were not so many (Luke 10 : 20). **Not defiled their garments** expresses the moral cleanliness of these men. The white garments mean the pure, devoted life (1 John 1 : 6). Jesus has a gracious promise for these men whose lives were white in the midst of a city of moral defilement. They lived for him, lived largely like him: **they shall walk with me**. The white in heaven is perfect. **Worthy** does not mean that

they are saved apart from Christ. They are saved through him, walk after him, live fitting lives, and shall receive what is becoming and right (Matt. 20 : 23). Jesus alone saves, but he rewards according to character.

**5.** A threefold promise is given to the overcomer man. He shall have white raiment (7 : 13, 14); they shall be clothed, rather, they shall be arrayed, in a garment like the one just described; his name shall not be erased from the heavenly register, **not blot out**, rather, *in no wise*; the man will be confessed before the Father and his angels. (Comp. the words of Jesus in Matt. 10 : 32.) The faithful Sardis Christians walked in white, and had their names on the church register. Heaven will be the Sardis life enlarged. The white will be whiter, and the names will be on the heavenly roll, held in everlasting remembrance. (For the book of life comp. Exod. 32 : 32; Dan. 12 : 1; Luke 10 : 20; Phil 4 : 3; Heb. 12 : 23; Rev. 13 : 8; 20 : 15; 21 : 27.) The words of Jesus spoken from heaven have many reminiscences of the words spoken on the earth. He is the same Jesus. He would speak, to-day, no words not in harmony with his recorded teachings.

**6.** This verse repeats the solemn emphasis upon the duty of hearing what Jesus says. Compare the same duty enjoined in his earthly ministry (Matt. 11 : 15; 13 : 9, 45; Mark 4 : 9, 23; 7 : 16, 33; Luke 8 : 8; 19 : 35). The Christian life is made up of two parts—the command of Jesus, the doing by the Christian.

**7-13. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.** Jesus is described as the holy and true one (ver. 7); the church is commended for faithfulness

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 <sup>a</sup> the key of David, <sup>b</sup> he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and <sup>c</sup> shutteth, and no man openeth.

8 I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee <sup>d</sup> an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, <sup>e</sup> and hast kept my word, and 9 hast not denied my name. Behold, I

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy, the True, he who has the key of David, he who opens, and no one shall shut, and shuts, and no one opens. I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which no one can shut; because thou hast a little power and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.

<sup>x</sup> 4 : 8; Isa. 49 : 7; Luke 1 : 35; Acts 3 : 14.

<sup>y</sup> 1 : 5; 19 : 11; John 14 : 6; 1 John 5 : 20.

<sup>z</sup> Isa. 22 : 22; Luke 1 : 32.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. 16 : 19; 28 : 18.

<sup>b</sup> Job 11 : 10; 12 : 14.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. 16 : 9; 2 Cor. 2 : 12; Col. 4 : 3.

<sup>d</sup> John 14 : 21-24; 17 : 6.

(ver. 8); a promise of support is given (ver. 9, 10); through faithfulness a crown may be won (ver. 11); the overcoming man shall be a pillar in God's house (ver. 12).

7. Philadelphia was of old the second city of Lydia, twenty-five miles southeast from Sardis, built 138 B. C., often injured by earthquakes, captured by the Turks, now having a population of ten thousand—mostly Turks; known now as Allah Shehr, the city of God. The tone of the Saviour's words is very different from that in the preceding letter to Sardis, and in the following letter to Laodicea. It was situated near these churches in territory, but was at a vast remove from them morally. Here the letter is, as a whole, commendatory. The description of Jesus is found in no definite statement in the vision in chap. I, but is given as the impress of the entire revelation. He is defined, as to character, in a twofold way—the **holy**, the **true**. Men are holy in part. Jesus is, by preeminence, the Holy One, apart from all evil, having a positive and perfect moral character. In the Old Testament God assumes to himself the title of the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 40 : 25). In making this claim here Jesus asserts his right to be regarded as divine. He is true, not as opposed to false, but is opposed to imperfection. (Comp. the same word in John 6 : 32.) As to authority he is described as having the **key of David**. For the historical allusion, see Isa. 22 : 12. Eliakim, in that place, is made the chief minister of the kingdom; his rule is supreme. Figuratively, Jesus is an Eliakim; having complete control in the Father's kingdom, his will is supreme. What he wills, no one may oppose. He is not an autocrat

with power used simply for the sake of display, but he is a wise and reasonable Christ. As head of the church he entrusted his work among men to apostles and others (Matt. 16 : 19; 18 : 18). But no one has any power, apart from Christ's revealed will, to open or shut the door. The ministry, the church, the ordinances are servants of Christ, not his masters. In his ministry on earth Jesus was called the Son of David (Matt. 20 : 31).

8. Here are words of commendation. The expression, **Behold . . . shut it**, is parenthetical. The statement in the preceding verse that Jesus has control of the door, lays the foundation for this statement that an open door is made for them. This may refer to an open door of opportunity and effectiveness in service here in this life (comp. 1 Cor. 16 : 9), or it may refer to the open door into glory in the next, inasmuch as the Jews spoken of afterward in ver. 9 may have declared that there could be no salvation for them. The following verse indicates that the reference is mainly to the open door of opportunity for labor. Jesus recognizes their humble position; **I know thy works . . . for thou hast**, rather, *that thou hast*. **A little strength**, rather, *little strength*, shows smallness in numbers—their few advantages, the little that could naturally be expected of them. But their littleness was combined with faithfulness. Their life is defined on the positive side—**kept**; on the negative side—**not denied**. They loved the words of Jesus, therefore they *kpt* them; they loved the person of Jesus—**my name**. At critical times in the past they had stood fast by Christ and his truth. Jesus could depend on them. In his

will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, <sup>a</sup>I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept <sup>b</sup>the word of my patience, <sup>b</sup>I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, <sup>c</sup>to try them that dwell upon the earth.

**11** Behold, <sup>d</sup>I come quickly. <sup>e</sup>Hold that

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

**10** Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole habitable earth, to **11** try those who dwell on the earth. I come quickly; hold fast that which

*e* 2 : 9. *f* Isa. 49 : 23; 60 : 14; Acts 16 : 37-39. *g* 14 : 12. *h* Dan. 12 : 1; 1 Cor. 10 : 13; 2 Peter 2 : 9.  
*i* Dan. 12 : 10; Zech. 13 : 9; 1 Peter 4 : 12. *k* 22 : 7, 12, 20; Phil. 4 : 5. *l* 2 : 25; James 1 : 12.

earthly ministry Jesus spoke comforting words to his little flock (Luke 12 : 32).

**9.** Here is the Saviour's promise. The passage is irregular in its grammatical construction. As in Smyrna, the church met with much opposition from unbelieving Jews. They were often more violent in disposition than the heathen (1 Thess. 2 : 14-16). The letters of Paul to the Galatians and to the Romans, the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) show how strong was the conflict between Judaism and Christianity. Having a form of godliness and the holy Scriptures they were, in reality, the allies of Satan. Satan has a throne (2 : 13); a synagogue (2 : 9); doctrines (2 : 24). **I will make**, rather, *I give*, a common Hebrew expression (Isa. 60 : 14). Through their faithfulness in living and explaining the Scriptures Jesus will cause it to come to pass that, not all, but some of their avowed opponents, will have a changed mind, will recognize God in Christ, and will worship; that is, pay them honor and respect, as representatives of God's cause. It is a greater triumph to see the opponents of Christ converted than to see them punished for their disobedience and obduracy. In time the veil will be taken from the mind of the Jewish people as a whole, and they will recognize Christ (Rom. 9 : 27). **To know that I have loved thee.** The world usually sees Christ through Christ's church and Christ's people. They are his best interpreters.

**10.** The Saviour's promise is continued. A faithful people will always find a covenant-keeping Christ. **The word of my patience** means the command of Christ to endure sufferings patiently, to bear up without wavering. Sufferings belong to the

Christian life (John 16 : 2; 2 Tim. 3 : 12); patient endurance is frequently urged (Luke 8 : 15; Matt. 10 : 22; 24 : 13). They would receive from Christ, **I will keep**, what they give to Christ, **thou hast kept**. **The hour of temptation** reveals a storm of persecution that will speedily come upon them; a storm not centuries hence, but something impending in actual sufferings, in losses of property, whose tendency would be to beget a loss of faith. Jesus does not promise to keep them from persecution, but to preserve them in it so that they would be aided and kept from falling. (Comp. 2 Cor. 12 : 9.) The trials would become temptations, but the temptations would not be seductions leading them astray. Jesus prayed not for exemption from sufferings for his followers, but for freedom from evil (John 17 : 15). Those who **dwell upon the earth** are here the ungodly as distinct from the saved. (Comp. the same expressions in 6 : 10; 11 : 10.) The saved, while on the earth, have their home in heaven; they are in the world, but not of it (John 17 : 14). The times of trial for the ungodly decide whether they will turn to the Lord in repentance, or will continue in ungodliness.

**11.** Here are words of counsel. Omit **Behold**. The coming referred to is not the second, final coming, but some intermediate coming in judgment upon his enemies (ver. 10); in supporting his people in persecutions; in bringing converts from the Jews by the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, in his earthly ministry, spoke of comings other than his final coming (Matt. 16 : 28). The **quickly** must refer to something happening in the near future. Those who place the composition of the book before A. D. 70, refer this to the destruction of Jerusalem. Those holding to a

- fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
- 12 Him that overcometh will I make <sup>m</sup> a pillar in the temple of my God ; and he shall go no more out ; and <sup>n</sup> I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is<sup>o</sup> New Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God <sup>p</sup> and *I will write upon him* my new name. 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 ; <sup>q</sup> These things

thou hast, that no one may take thy crown. He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more ; and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and <sup>r</sup> 13 my new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- 14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write : These things says the

*m* 1 Kings 7 : 21; Gal. 2 : 9 Eph. 2 : 19-22; 1 Peter 2 : 4-6.

*n* 2 : 17; 14 : 1.

*o* 21 : 2, 10; Gal. 4 : 26, Heb. 12 : 22.

*p* 22 : 4; Isa. 62 : 2.

*q* 2 Cor. 1 : 20.

later date refer to his interposition in providence, in punishment, without particularly defining any event. Regarding all the ages and all the world as under the providential control of Christ, for the sake of his church, many turning-points in history may be regarded as coming of the Lord Jesus. **Hold that fast.** (Comp. 2 : 6, 25.) **No man take thy crown.** The *crown* refers to that which will come as the reward of faithfulness, not a present possession. No one could take it away for himself; but a person might beguile him (Col. 2 : 18), might seduce him from the way, and thus his crown would be taken away. No man can really be injured save by himself. If a crown is given it is Christ who gives it. If a crown is lost it is the man who causes its loss. Jesus appeals to faithfulness.

**12.** Here is the closing promise. The conquering man will be a pillar in God's temple, in the upper and after life. Two ideas are suggested—that of permanence as a reward of faithfulness here, and that of beauty. There will be no possibility of falling through temptation. Every overcoming one is a pillar. Upon him, or upon the pillar representing him, will be written three names. **My God.** For instances of writing God's name upon the forehead see 7 : 3; 14 : 1; 22 : 4. This signifies that he belongs to God in an openly recognized way. (Comp. 11 : 5; Jer. 23 : 6; 33 : 16.) **The New Jerusalem**, heavenly, divine in its origin, signifies the completion of the Christian life, the time when the earthly becomes the heavenly. (See Chap. XXI.) He is a mem-

ber of the heavenly city, a partaker of the heavenly life. The **new name** of Jesus is that of redeemer, conqueror. The name stands for the real man himself. A new name signifies some new disclosure of the person. Here Jesus is revealed in a new and larger way. The work of Jesus was not completed on the earth; there were required the entrance into the holiest of all above, and the acquirement of the Holy Spirit for his people.

**13.** The **Spirit** speaks of very large and precious promises. The ear should be attentive to these large promises. Christians need to listen to the promises so that faith may be encouraged, and the steps strengthened. Even Jesus was helped by the consideration of the promises made to struggling men (Heb. 12 : 2).

**14-22. LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA.** Jesus is described as the faithful witness (ver. 14); the church is in a neutral spiritual condition (ver. 15, 17); a threat of rejection is made (ver. 16); gracious counsel is given (ver. 18-20); the overcoming man will reign with Christ (ver. 21).

**14. The church of the Laodiceans,** rather, *in Laodicea*. This town, Laodicea, was on the Lycus, the capital of Phrygia, a commercial center, subject to earthquakes, finally destroyed by the Turks, and now in ruins. Paul alludes to the church here in Col. 4 : 15. An important church council was held here in the fourth century. In this letter Jesus is described as the **Amen.** Some think that in this is a reference to the fact that this is the last message of Jesus, in some sense confirmatory of them all. It is better

saieth 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 16 wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, \*I will spue thee out of my

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 16 hot. So, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about

r Ver. 7.

s John 1 : 3 ; Col. 1 : 15.

t 2 : 4 ; Hosea 10 : 2.

u Josh. 24 : 15-24 ; 1 Kings 18 : 21 ; Matt. 12 : 30.

x 2 : 5.

to take it as the assertion of his truthfulness. In Isa. 65 : 16 Jehovah is called the God of truth, literally the God of amen. Jesus assumes to himself this attribute of deity, claiming for himself a nature of absolute truthfulness. This is explained by the further claim to be the **faithful and true witness**. He witnesses for God to men, revealing in utmost truthfulness the nature, the will, the desires of God. He reveals him fully and faithfully. This should lead them to be faithful witnesses in the presence of errors and dangers. A witnessing Christ should beget witnessing Christians. **Beginning** means, not the first one of created things, which would rank Christ among created beings, but source, origin. Compare Col. 1 : 18, where the same word is used as here. Jesus is not a part of creation, but the head of creation. It is by way of contrast with the unfaithful witnessing of the Laodicean church that Jesus is called the faithful, true one. They needed to get a right view of Christ as the true and mighty one.

**15.** Jesus describes their spiritual condition. He begins in the severest tones. **Cold** describes the condition of those untouched by regenerating grace, those in heathenism, the unbelieving Jews. **Hot** expresses the condition of the highest kind of the Christian life, the fervent spiritual temperature of a Paul, consumed with a holy zeal (Rom. 12 : 11). This ought to be the normal condition of the Christian life. **Cold** is used by Jesus in Matt. 24 : 12 in a modified sense as indicating a lower stage in the Christian life. The Laodicean church was in a neutral spiritual condition, it had neither life in its fulness of joy and peace, nor death with its entire absence of love. Jesus says, **I would . . . cold.** In this is apparent the danger of an in-

different spiritual condition. It is not heresy that is condemned, nor licentiousness, but a religious torpor, sluggishness, an utter indifference to the claims of duty, the love of Jesus, the opportunities for service, the influences of the unseen life. Does Jesus intend to declare that it is better to be in an unsaved condition, unregenerate, than in a Christian life characterized by great moderation? This ought not to be a deduction from his words. If a person is lukewarm in love there is room for enlargement in love. It is better to be a Christian, even in the lower stages, than in a non-Christian state. What he means is to express in a very strong way the feeling: "I could wish that you were in any state but this." A person unsaved may freely admit his own peril of soul, while the man with the name of Christ upon him may make this an excuse for a careless life. It is often more difficult to awaken a backsliding Christian than to reach a man who never has known Christ. Peter declares that a man apostatizing from Christ has a worse fate than if he had never known the Saviour (2 Peter 2 : 20).

**16.** A threat is here made by Jesus. It is a physical effect of warm water to produce a tendency to vomiting. Jesus wishes to show his utter dislike of their spiritual condition. **I will spew**, rather, *I am about to spew*. It is not a final decision to throw them away, but there is revealed the imminent danger. We must not infer that Jesus places his highest regard upon the fervent heart, and his next highest regard upon the man utterly insensible in mind. This is not in accord with what we know of God, and it is to press a figure too far to make it teach this. What is here condemned is the proud self-conceit of the Laodiceans imagining themselves

17 mouth. Because thou sayest, <sup>y</sup>I am rich, and increased with goods, <sup>z</sup>and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, <sup>a</sup>and blind, and naked; 18 I counsel thee <sup>b</sup>to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and <sup>c</sup>white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and <sup>d</sup>that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; <sup>e</sup>and anoint thine eyes with eyosalve, that thou 19 mayest see. <sup>f</sup>As many as I love, I

17 to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and pitiable, and poor, 18 and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest, and eyosalve to anoint thine eyes that thou 19 mayest see. As many as I love, I re-

<sup>y</sup> Prov. 13 : 7; Hosea 12 : 8; Luke 18 : 11, 12; 1 Cor. 4 : 8. <sup>z</sup> Deut. 8 : 11-14.

<sup>a</sup> John 9 : 40, 41; 2 Peter 1 : 8, 9. <sup>b</sup> Isa. 55 : 1; Matt. 13 : 44.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 4, 5; 7 : 13; Isa. 61 : 10; Phil. 3 : 9. <sup>d</sup> John 8 : 12; 1 John 2 : 20, 27. <sup>e</sup> Job 5 : 17.

to be rich in heart when they were utterly poor. This state of soul Jesus declares is nauseating to him.

17. This verse reveals their mistaken estimate of themselves. The higher the spiritual condition, the more conscious is the soul of its deficiencies. It is the mark of a growing life to have a completer knowledge of the meaning of the Christian life, and to be aware of shortcomings. As Paul grew in holiness he grew in sensitiveness as to the remaining sin in his heart. The Lao-diceans said of themselves, they were **rich, increased in goods, have need of nothing.** These refer, not to material things, but to their assumed spiritual riches, though it may be that a growing wealth in material things contributed to their spiritual pride, thinking that this was a testimony to them of God's approval. The estimate of their condition is given by Jesus in five descriptive phrases, **wretched, rather, the wretched one; miserable, not a state of conscious misery, but a state deserving of pity; poor, in a real sense before God; blind as to their own condition and God's requirements; naked, exposed to God's anger, living in a shameful condition.** We can never know what a man really is until we get to know what God thinks of him.

18. Here is the counsel of the rich and enriching Christ. He counsels three things: getting the true riches, covering the soul with the white robe of forgiveness, obtaining the spiritual eyesight. Then, of necessity, the misery and wretchedness would pass away. To **buy** of Christ is to receive from Christ for the asking. There is

need of repentance, the throwing aside of human merit as the ground of salvation, the right estimate of ourselves, the earnest petition (Matt. 13 : 44, 46; Isa. 55 : 1). A man buys of Christ with poverty of soul. Emptiness of self means fulness of Christ. The **gold tried in the fire**, rather, *refined by the fire*, is the true spiritual wealth, freed from imperfections. The **white raiment** is the forgiveness granted by Christ, the holiness inwrought by the Spirit (ver. 4, 5). An unforgiven soul is unlovely to holy beings. Moral evil is the only thing that the holy God hates. Physical deformities may be pitied; moral deformities must be condemned (16:15). And **anoint...eyosalve**, rather, *and eyosalve to anoint their eyes*. The Holy Spirit convicts the soul, opening the inner eyes, showing a man to himself (Luke 16 : 17), that he may be led to see Jesus (John 12 : 21). Their case was not hopeless if they would but dismiss their mistaken thoughts of themselves and begin the life of right thinking in God's sight. Open eyes are essential to safe walking. Satan, as a blind teacher, blinds the eyes of men (2 Cor. 4 : 4). Jesus enriches, covers with a garment of beauty, restores sight.

19. In the first four letters Jesus praises before he blames. In the letter to Sardis he blames before he praises. Here he blames and gives not a word of praise. He found the entire church apparently sunk in spiritual lethargy. In this verse is shown the tender side of the Saviour. He shows them that it is his love for them that leads him to expose their real condition. The word, **I**, is emphatic in the Greek. He in-

rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent. 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.

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

prove and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any one hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me. He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

*f* 2 Cor. 7:11. *g* Song of Sol. 5:2-4; Matt. 11:28; 2 Cor. 5:20. *h* Luke 12:37; John 6:37.

*i* John 14:21-23. *j* 19:9. *k* 1:6; Matt. 19:28. *l* John 16:33; Heb. 12:2.

*m* Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 28:18.

*n* 2:7

forms them that he loves them, and therefore rebukes, rather, reproves, and chastens. He censures severely that he may save completely. Two duties are enjoined; their lukewarmness must give way to a zealous spirit, and repentance must arise for their grievous falling away. Then the righteous and holy life will dwell in them richly. Jesus can counsel, but they alone can consent and repent. It requires the union of Christ and the Laodiceans to make a good church in Laodicea.

**20.** This verse is an expansion and enforcement of the preceding. It is one of the tenderest passages in the entire revelation of Christ. To the Laodiceans, or any member of the church, sunk in conceit, ignorant of God, with mistaken conceptions, Jesus comes with blessing. He is the creating Christ, the visiting Christ, the waiting Christ, the knocking Christ, the beseeching Christ. It is implied that every one will hear his voice. Not every one will inquire, Who is there? not every one hearing will bid him enter. The divine and the human are united in the salvation of the soul. No one but the one on the inside can say, Come in. No heart is too small to be large enough for the Saviour. Jesus will change a humble heart into a palace.

**21.** Here follows the promise. These statements Jesus makes concerning his own life; he entered into a thoroughly human life; he met with difficulties of all kinds; he overcame them with the help of the Father, who is also their Father; he is with the Father on his throne. Jesus lived a life that can be imitated. He had struggles, met with

temptations, overcame them (John 16:33). As a reward he is now on an exalted throne (Phil. 2:9-11). He urges on them the duty of overcoming, in this case overcoming sluggishness and indifference. There will be for them the reward of reigning with Christ, a joint heirship with Christ (Rom. 5:17). The same relation that Jesus bears to the Father, the believer bears to Christ (1 Cor. 2:23). Jesus could not give a larger promise than that here given, that of heirship with God through himself. The promise is a wonderful inspiration to repentance, zeal, faithfulness.

**22.** God made the ear that it might listen to him. **He that hath an ear**, etc. This exhortation follows each epistle. Wider than the churches—all who have ears to hear are addressed—not only the letters, but the revelation that follows.

**NOTE. A GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHURCHES.** 1. As to church government. While nothing is said directly on the form of church government, yet incidental hints are given, throwing light on that of the first century. Each church is seen to be independent of all others. There is no common church occupying an entire district, no individual church losing its identity in that of others. Each church is addressed as a church distinct from others. Each church is also held responsible for permitting errors to be taught within the limits of the membership (2:20). The church, as a church, is charged with the maintenance of sound doctrine. This, of course, carries with it the right of exclusion from the church for wrong

teaching and wrong living. There is no shadow of the papacy or any governing power outside of or above the individual church. There is no bishop, in any modern use of that term. So far as we see the church life of this early century it is that of an independent, self-governing body.

2. As to heresies in the church. In the letter to the Ephesians, allusion is made to some who claimed to be apostles (2:2). No indication is given as to the character of their teachings. These teachers may have been Judaizers affirming that to be a Christian one must first be a Jew, or Antinomians, declaring that the moral law has no claims upon Christians, leading directly, on the part of most, to licentiousness. At Smyrna (2:9) and at Philadelphia (3:9) are those claiming to be Jews, but are not in reality. The Jews here spoken of may have been in the church, destroying its peace by unduly exalting Moses; or Jews on the outside disturbing it by opposition. The existence of false teachers in Ephesus was foretold by Paul (Acts 20:29). Their existence there is asserted in 2 Tim. 1:15. We find evidence also of Gnostic elements in the churches. These declared that matter was not the creation of God, that matter is sinful, that Jesus had no real fleshy body, associated almost always with licentiousness in life. Teaching that matter is of necessity sinful, it declared that it was useless to try to keep it under control or subdue it. In two churches licentiousness is found in connection with idolatrous worship (2:14, 20). Such uncleanness came in all probability from Gnosticism. As to the method of testing false teachers (2:2), the churches had the presence of men who had known the apostles, the apostolic traditions, a part of the New Testament writings, the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3. As to persecution. Persecutions had taken place, to which allusion is made in 2:13. Persecution was everywhere associated with the early New Testament church life. Sometimes it was widespread, sometimes merely local. It arose sometimes from Jewish, sometimes from heathen, sources. In many places allusion is made to the endurance needed. Every letter

bears witness to the life of constant struggle. Each letter closes with the promise to the overcoming man. The poverty of the Smyrna church (2:9) may have been due to social and business ostracism or to persecution. The letters breathe the spirit of a time of tribulation and martyrdom.

4. The ideal of the church. Christ's conception of the church is everywhere apparent—a body of holy people, overcoming in life, patient, enduring, full of love and helpfulness. He desires a church growing in all forms of church life, maintaining soundness of teaching, apart from all moral evil. Jesus rejoices with the churches in their holy life, counsels them in their infirmity, upbraids them in their weak conformity with the world. Nothing will satisfy Jesus but such a church life as will manifest him to the world in the fulness of his purity, power, life, and teaching. A regenerate membership is assumed. These letters know nothing of any sacramental power in the church itself or in the ordinances. Christ alone can save.

5. Individual characteristics. Each church has a life of its own. Ephesus was sound in faith, active in service, but lacking in love. Smyrna was full of service, suffering, persecution. No censure is passed on this church. Pergamos is, in part, faithful; in part lax in discipline, having licentiousness in the church. Thyatira is active with a growing love, but lax in discipline in permitting a false teacher to remain in the church. Worldliness has largely come into the church. Sardis was living on its past. It has a dead present. It is deficient in all respects, only a few holding the faith. Philadelphia is faithful, limited in resources, meeting with opposition. Laodicea is lukewarm in affection and service, mistaken as to its own condition. Its condition is the worst of the seven.

These churches are looked upon as real churches, in each of which Christ has a real interest. Very defective some are, yet regarded as churches. They fall very far short, taken as a whole, from the ideal of the church as presented in the vision (1:12). In some one or more of these churches every church will find its own counterpart.

For a helpful work on the letters to the churches read Trench's "Letters to the Seven Churches." Also Ramsay's.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The Holy Spirit is essential to the efficiency of Christ's work. Without his work, no one would feel his sin, be led to Christ, be renewed in heart, be built up in holiness. Jesus has the Spirit, and sends the Spirit to carry on his work in the heart. Jesus is the intercessor on high with God; the Holy Spirit is the intercessor in the heart with man (ver. 1).

2. What a thing really depends on what God thinks of it. Jesus compares man's works with God's requirements. Weighed and found wanting will be written on every man's life, apart from the forgiveness of Jesus and the help of God (ver. 2).

3. Backsliding will be remedied by a remembrance of the first love, by an earnest repentance, by a closer walk with God. No one who wishes to get back to God is too far away. The cure for backsliding is not remorse, but repentance (ver. 3).

4. Truth does not always lie with majorities. Few, comparatively, were in the church; few in the church, comparatively, were real Christians. We must not walk with the multitude, but with truth (ver. 4).

5. Association with wealth, fashion, worldliness takes away the spirituality of the life. Only in a separation is safety. It is possible to be in the world, but not of it. In the worst places the best Christian lives may be formed. Association with Christ here involves walking with Christ hereafter (ver. 4, 5).

6. Even the whitest garments here are defiled. The best man has flaws in character. Jesus will give a growing whiteness here, and a complete whiteness hereafter (ver. 5, 6).

7. It is well that no man or church has power to shut out of heaven or to admit. Stephen was stoned as unworthy to live, but Jesus opened the door for him (ver. 7).

8. When Jesus makes an open door for service, it should be entered. Paul had

the open door, and entered it (ver. 8; 1 Cor. 16: 9).

9. Jesus notices and rewards faithfulness on the part of his servants. Carey worked seven years before one convert came. God gave him this reward that even his enemies were led to honor him and cherish his memory (ver. 9).

10. Jesus has a wonderful keeping power. Man needs a keeping Saviour, for he cannot keep himself (ver. 10).

11. If a man is faithful, Christ will crown him; if he is faithless, he throws his crown away. If a man crowns Christ as his king, Jesus will crown him as friend and victor (ver. 11).

12. To belong to God is a high honor, a pledge of safety, and an incentive to holiness and devotion. Every believer ought to write Christ's name on his business and life (ver. 12).

13. Jesus is the head of creation, and bears it up. He is faithful in maintaining the laws of nature; in keeping his promises. More fixed than nature's laws are his words to his people (ver. 14).

14. The tendency of days of prosperity, when Christianity is accepted in a general way by all, is to a state of indifference. The heart begins with earnestness, then loses its warmth and settles down into inactivity. It sometimes is easier to bring a soul to Christ than to arouse and revive a dwindling life (ver. 15).

15. Jesus can do nothing with lukewarm people while lukewarm. He loves outspokenness, decision, whole-heartedness. An outspoken life, like Saul's, becomes the whole-hearted Paul when Christ comes in. It is better for a life to burn out than to freeze out (ver. 16).

16. To deceive one's self is easy. A wrong standard of judging, the overlooking of our faults, with Satan's blinding, will lead astray. It is a wise prayer: "Show me myself." Ps. 139: 23, 24 is a good prayer for all (ver. 17).

17. Jesus has all things needful for making a rich and beautiful life. Spiritual blessings, golden hopes, the blessedness of forgiveness, the right view of things, all come from Christ to enrich each man who is willing to receive them. The poor in spirit alone can buy from Jesus (ver. 18).

18. Jesus sees the heart that he may make it right. His love is an incentive to repentance (ver. 19).

19. Jesus should be treated as well as an earthly friend. Many are good Samaritans to their neighbors who will not permit Jesus a place in their hearts (ver. 20).

20. It will help the struggling Christian to remember that Jesus passed over the same road. He knows the meaning of life in all its fulness; its temptations and perils. He, having overcome them, knows how to help his followers to overcome (ver. 21).

21. The same perils confront the churches to-day that met them in the first century. If Jesus were here to-day in person he would speak to his churches words of approval, of counsel, of censure, of threatening. He has the same mind to-day that is revealed in these letters. If the churches belong to Christ they must listen to Christ (ver. 22).

**SECTION III. CHAPTERS IV, V.**  
**THE VISION OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB.** These chapters, which form part of one whole, are introductory to the main contents of the book. Without them the remaining parts would be unintelligible. We have had a vision of the Lord Jesus as a present, ever-living, conquering Christ, having in mind his churches for their upbuilding in faith and the subjection of their foes. We have seen the churches in their actual life, their corruptions in doctrine, the opposition of Satan, the seductions of worldliness. The churches are partly conquering, partly conquered. Before the future is revealed, the struggles yet to come, the new forms of evil that should arise with the growing corruption in the church, there is first brought to view a sight of the glorious Father in whom all power resides. Back of and above all nature, history, all the forces about us, is the great God. We see in this vision how God's thoughts and plans concern the churches on the earth. We see the churches, not existing apart from his control, but under his control. The churches engaged in struggles on the earth may well feel encouraged when they know that this great God is in-

terested in them. The same one who is worshiped by the angels, and by the saved of all ages, is their friend. There is also a vision of Jesus, the conquering Christ, conquering because a crucified Saviour. The church is his, bought with his blood; it is his to-day. No one apart from revelation may even guess what its future shall be. Its history is a sealed book. But Jesus foretells it in a highly figurative way, unfolds it not for the gratification of curiosity, not as mere history with its definite dates, but in a large and general way gives its outlines. It is not a history written beforehand. But the future is revealed, as it were, in the form of parables. Jesus is the founder of the church, he is also its prophet, making known the general course of its struggles and its triumphs. He is also that mighty one who brings the things thus foretold to pass. The history of the church is not an accident. Jesus is seen as the center of an admiring worship on the part of the redeemed, of all the creation, because it is seen that the unfolding of the church's history is under his control. Before John and the struggling churches of that day, before us in this day, is the sight of the Almighty God caring for the churches; the sight of Jesus, the Lamb of God, having their safety, their progress and development, their outcome in glory under his own personal control. We have in chapter V a sealed book, the history of God's cause on the earth. We then have an unsealing Saviour. The remaining chapters of this book give the contents of that unsealed book.

The Lord Jesus stands forth as God's great agent, not simply as unfolding what is to be, but as the one bringing it to pass. Nothing less than this could have presented so great a difficulty—a difficulty too great to be removed by the assembled holy intelligences. It was a work of opposition, of war, of conquest, as is evident from the term applied to Jesus, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." The work before Jesus Christ is the universal possession and sovereignty of the earth. (See Matt. 28: 18.) The book is therefore the book of the inheritance, laying open the way in which the earth is to be placed under subjection to Christ. It is sealed com-

*Vision of God and his throne; the worship in heaven.*

**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

o Ezek. 1:1.

p 1:10.

q 11:12; comp. Ezek. 3:12; 8:3; 2 Cor. 12:1, 2.

r 1:19; 22:6.

pletely, a complicated mystery. It is as redeemer that Jesus is seen approaching the book, to disclose and fulfil its burden. The method by which Jesus is to enter upon his rightful possession is through his mediatorial work, through his cross, and all the spiritual agencies that spring from the cross. (See John 12:32.) There must first be the gathering of a people to be the agent and helper of Christ, and then the putting down of all opposition. From the nature of the case this work will embrace a wide territory, many centuries, many agencies, but of the issue there can be no doubt. We have here the marshaling of the moral and spiritual forces—the Almighty God, the Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, good angels, the powers and activities of nature under the control of God. Again and again in this book, at the end of each section, there is the assurance or statement of the final triumph. This section is therefore a general one, preparatory to the details of the varying forms of the opposition, the conflict, and the victory. Having seen the church as it actually is in the world in chapters II, III, the seer now gives us a representation of the victorious progress that awaits her in her future and impending conflicts. If the book of Revelation were to close at the end of this section, we would be aware of an intense opposition to the Christly reign, of a long series of events before the final consummation, of mighty forces to be engaged on both sides, and of a great and abiding victory for the Redeemer at the close. Heaven is jubilant as it beholds the issue of the struggle. Compare Porter, "The Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers," on these chapters.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Here is a vision of the Almighty Father upon the throne. A view is given of the very center and source of

**4** AFTER these things I saw, and, behold, a door set open in heaven, and that first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will show

all power. God is the holy and almighty God—a ruler. Unseen by men his plans and power extend through the universe. Fittingly in this chapter we get, first, a sight of God. In the next chapter is a sight of Jesus, through whom God works. The book unfolds, in an orderly way, the development of Christ's cause upon the earth. Back of the church and its progress on the earth is Christ, its head and ruler. Back of Christ is God the Father. John shows to us God.

**1. AN OPEN DOOR.** We have a door opened into heaven, through which John gets a view of God and his worship. It is a heavenly portraiture of what will soon take place upon the earth. He is called hither by the voice heard in 1:10.

After this means soon after, in close connection with the vision which precedes in 1:19. Looked, rather, saw. **Door was opened**, rather, *a door opened*. He saw the door standing open, he did not see it when opened. Through this opened door he looked into heaven. The scene is placed in the upper sanctuary, not upon the earth. It is in wisdom and mercy that a door is opened so that men may know what God is and does and plans to do. Apart from revelation we may only guess what shall be in after ages, and what the upper life is. The **first voice** alludes to the voice heard in 1:19. He does not mean the first voice as distinguished from the many voices afterward heard in this book, but the first voice heard. Omit **was**. **Which said**, rather, *one saying*. In the opened heaven he saw the vision of things to occur on the earth. He saw history in the making. The vision is also for us that we may look through the opened door with John.

**2, 3. A SIGHT OF GOD.** We have a statement of what John saw. Naturally he would see first that great Being without whom creation and redemption

will show 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: 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.

thee the things which must take place after these.

**2** Straightway I was in the Spirit; and, behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting on the throne; and he who sat was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round the throne, in

s 1 : 10; 17 : 3; 21 : 10.

t Isa. 6 : 1; Jer. 17 : 12; Ezek. 1 : 26-28; 10 : 1; Dan. 7 : 9.

Ezek. 1 : 28.

and providence could not be. John first sees God. No description of him is here given in a distinct way. He is revealed, in a general way, as a being of holiness and majesty combined with grace. The jasper reveals his holiness; the sardius his righteousness; the rainbow his gracious disposition.

**2.** It is better to join hereafter, which is, literally, after these things, with this verse, reading as in the Margin of the Revised version, *After these things immediately I was in the spirit.* As in 1 : 10 he sees this heavenly vision as with outward eyes, but really in an uplifted spiritual state. Paul speaks of his heavenly vision in the same way (2 Cor. 12 : 2). The expression, *in the spirit*, is always used without the article, literally, in spirit. This does not mean in the disembodied state, nor under the influence of the Spirit, nor in a state of holiness, but in a state of spiritual ecstasy, in a special relation to him who is Spirit. **A throne was set in heaven,** rather, *there was a throne set in heaven.* He did not see it placed there. Looking through the door he saw it already located. (Comp. Ezek. 1; Dan. 7 : 9.) **One sat on the throne,** rather, *one sitting.* This is intended to represent the Father. The Holy Spirit is spoken of in ver. 5; Jesus is introduced in 5 : 6. Moses (Exod. 33 : 23), Isaiah (Isa. 6), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1 : 26), all had manifestations of the Godhead. No attempt is made to describe him in a definite and detailed way. It is intimated, though in an indefinite way, that the divine person is shadowed forth in a human form, as in Isa. 6 : 1, 5; Ezek. 1 : 26; Dan. 7 : 19; Exod. 33 : 23; comp. Deut. 4 : 12. God is spirit (John 4 : 24), hence no representation of him can be made. His moral nature is revealed in a clear and distinct way. John makes no attempt to describe the unspeakable glory of

the person of the Father, though he speaks of his hand in 5 : 1. Art has never undertaken to describe the person of the Father or Spirit, reserving its powers to describe the person of Jesus, who had a real human form. The vision guards us against materialistic and debasing conceptions of God. We see God through Jesus Christ.

**3.** We now have the character of God described in highly figurative expressions. He is like **jasper**, a precious stone described as red, green, yellow. By a comparison with 21 : 11 it must be understood here as having a pure whiteness. The Father is a God of utter holiness of character. **Sardine**, rather, *sardius*, is a sparkling red stone. This signifies God's righteousness that comes out in punishment, that can tread down the oppressor, that can punish the ungodly. God is not this only; if he were, there would be no hope for us. To be holy and righteous would mean heaven for the holy and hell for the ungodly, but no salvation for sinful men. The **rainbow** is significant of mercy, of hope. The rainbow is the emblem of God's covenant of grace (Gen. 9 : 13). Whether the rainbow was all green, **emerald**, or whether it was restful to the eye as this color, cannot be determined. John sees and describes God as a holy, righteous, and merciful being. Such a God may be loved, admired, sought after. Such a God can welcome pardoned sinners to heaven. Tenderness and holiness are united in a glorious way in God (1 Peter 2 : 6, 8; Heb. 12 : 28).

**4-8. THE ATTENDANTS OF GOD: THE ELDERS, THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE LIVING CREATURES.** John next sees the representatives of the redeemed church above. It would be a great encouragement to John and his fellow-Christians, suffering distress, to know that their brothers are in heaven, sharing its joy and power. It is a prophecy

**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. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which

4 appearance like an emerald; and around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and on the thrones twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne come forth lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which

*x* 11 : 16; *Dan.* 7 : 22; *Matt.* 19 : 28; *Luke* 22 : 30.

*a* 8 : 5; 16 : 18; *Exod.* 19 : 16; *Ps.* 18 : 13, 14.

*y* 3 : 4, 5; 19 : 8, 14.

*z* Ver. 10.

*b* *Ezek.* 1 : 13; *Zech.* 4 : 2.

that they, through faithfulness, may dwell in God's presence.

(1) **The elders.** About the throne are twenty-four elders representing the redeemed of both dispensations. They delight to be near God, pure in heart, crowned as kings (ver. 4).

(2) **The Holy Spirit.** As indicative of the judgments about to come upon the earth lightnings proceed from the throne. Seven bright burning lights stand for the Holy Spirit in the completeness of his work, lighting up God's providences, always accompanying his works. The Spirit throws light upon God and his ways (ver. 5).

(3) **The four living creatures.** Before the throne is a glassy sea adding to the majesty of the scene. Four creatures, full of life, are seen, one on each side of the throne. They are nearest God in their approach. They are full of intelligence and activity, of holiness and praise. Unceasingly they attribute to the Almighty the possession of complete holiness of character. They begin the praise that fills the heavenly temple (ver. 6-8).

**4. Seats, rather, thrones.** These are subordinate to the great central throne. The **elders** are spoken of in many places in this book (4 : 10, 11; 5 : 5, 6, 8-11, 14; 7 : 11, 13-17; 11 : 16-18; 14 : 3; 19 : 4). They represent the redeemed people from the earth, both the Old and New Testament saints. There were twelve tribes, representing God's people of the olden times. There were twelve apostles, representing the New Testament followers of God. For allusions to the twelve apostles see Matt. 19 : 28; Luke 22 : 30; Rev. 21 : 12, 14. The elders stand for conscious persons, for they offer voluntary worship; they display intelligence and sympathy (7 : 13). They represent the redeemed from the earth, for they ascribe salva-

tion to Christ (5 : 8-11). They act in a priestly way (5 : 8). The vision reveals to John that the godly are not lost, but possess a personal life. They worship God, they have sympathy with their struggling brothers, they have power with God. They are pure, clothed in **white raiment**; they are kings, they have golden **crowns**.

5. There is now a revelation of another person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Naturally, in order of thought, Jesus would next be presented. When he appears it is in close connection with the history and development of the church that belongs to him. **Proceeded**, rather, *proceed*. John, in vision, beholds and hears **lightnings, thunderings, and voices**. They awaken awe, reveal God's power, show the terribleness of his dealings. They reveal nothing of special significance, but they make a deep impression upon the mind of John. They show the severer side of God's nature, and prepare the way for his heavy punishments upon the wicked, as shown in this book. In whatever way God is revealed, it must be through symbols, whose meaning will be plain to us. The Holy Spirit is now revealed to us under the figure of **seven lamps of fire burning before the throne**. In the tabernacle was the seven-branched candlestick. The churches are represented by the seven lampstands (1 : 20). In Zech. 4 the seven-branched candlestick represents the Holy Spirit. These lights irradiate the throne of God. The great mission and purpose of the Spirit is to reveal the character of God, to make known his will to men. As the Spirit has no bodily shape, it is fitting that the fire, bright, consuming, irradiating, should stand for his work. The Spirit is an eternal person, revealed especially in the New Testament, after

6 are <sup>c</sup>the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was <sup>d</sup>a sea of glass like unto crystal. <sup>e</sup>And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes  
 7 before and behind. <sup>f</sup>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

6 are the seven spirits of God; and before the throne as it were a glassy sea like crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and  
 7 behind. And the first creature was like a lion and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature having the face as of a man, and the

*c* 1 : 4; Zech. 4 : 10; Matt. 3 : 11.

*d* 15 : 2; Exod. 24 : 10.

*e* Isa. 6 : 1-3; Ezek. 1 : 5-10.

*f* Ezek. 10 : 14, 20-22.

the ascension of Christ. Where God is, the Spirit is. The Spirit opens the works and words of God to us; at the same time he opens our hearts to receive them and understand them.

6. We here meet with four mysterious representations, with forms unlike anything in actual life. If they were portrayed on canvas they would be grotesque and repulsive. But taken as representations of moral ideas, they are highly suggestive. These are most mysterious of all the attendants upon the Almighty. They are nearest in their approach to God; they lead in the worship of God as Creator. All the surroundings of the throne are beautiful, instructive, pleasing to the eye. **And . . . crystal**, rather, *And before the throne as it were a glassy sea, like crystal*. Before the temple was a sea, the brazen vessel, full of water (<sup>1</sup> Kings 7 : 23). In front of the upper temple is this glassy sea, perhaps solid (15 : 2), giving the idea of calmness, or repose, as when the sea is quiet. In all likelihood the figure of the brazen laver on the earth suggested the glassy sea in the upper life. No unclean man could enter the earthly temple; he must remove all defilement in the laver. No uncleanness can enter the upper sanctuary; all is moral cleanliness there. The glassy sea suggests and declares holiness as an essential of heaven. **In the midst of the throne**. This does not mean that they supported the throne or formed a part of it, but suggests their nearness to it, their identification with the life and plans of God. Each one may have stood at the middle part of one side of the throne. **Round about**, on each side. **Beasts**, rather, *living creatures*. Nothing is more unfortunate than the rendering, *beast*. The word rightly rendered *beast*, is found in 13 : 1-4, meaning a savage, wild, fierce creature. Here the

word means a creature whose whole being is distinguished by life in its fulness. It not only exists, as do all creatures, but it has life as its characteristic. The foundation for these mysterious forms is found in Ezekiel and Isaiah. In Ezekiel we see four cherubim, each in the form of a man, having four faces each, four wings each, alongside of whom were wheels full of eyes. In Ezek. 12 the entire body was full of eyes, signifying the fulness of intelligence. In Isa. 6 we have the seraphim, meaning the shining ones, in the form of a man, with six wings each, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." Over the ark of the covenant (Exod. 26 : 1), and on the inside of the tabernacle, were figures of cherubim, whose form is nowhere accurately described. The living creatures here described are unlike any other Old Testament figures, combining the forms of Ezekiel and Isaiah. We may notice the characteristics of these creatures. They are full of intelligence, as shown by the eyes in all parts of the body. The upraised wings are also full of eyes; they unweariedly praise God for his complete holiness; they represent the highest forms of the intelligent creation, the man, the ox, the eagle, the lion. While intimately associated with the redeemed from the earth, represented by the twenty-four elders, they are at the same time distinct from them. The number four signifies a certain kind of completeness, one on each side of the throne. They join with the elders in the praise for redemption.

7. **Beast**, rather, *creature*. It is probable that in every case the body was that of a man with the differing heads. These four forms present the four highest classes of the animate creation. **As a man**, rather, *as of a man*. The Septuagint translators often

8 beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them <sup>a</sup>six wings about him; and they were <sup>b</sup>full of eyes within. And they rest not day and night, saying,  
*i* "Holy, holy, holy—Lord God Almighty" [Isa. 6: 3],  
*k* 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, <sup>l</sup>who liveth for ever and ever, <sup>m</sup>the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, <sup>n</sup>and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,  
 11 <sup>o</sup>"Thou art worthy, O Lord—to receive glory and honour and power:  
*p* For thou hast created all things, And <sup>q</sup>for thy pleasure they are and were created.

fourth creature like an eagle flying.  
 8 And the four creatures having each of them six wings, around and within are full of eyes; and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty; who was, and who is, and who is to come.  
 9 And when the living creatures shall give glory, and honor, and thanks, to him who sits on the throne, to him  
 10 who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before him who sits on the throne, and will worship him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory, and the honor, and the power; because thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

*g* Isa. 6: 2. *h* Ver. 6; Ezek. 1: 18; 10: 12. *i* Isa. 6: 3. *k* 1: 4; Ps. 90: 1.  
*l* 1: 18; 5: 14; Exod. 15: 18; Isa. 40: 28; Jer. 10: 10; Heb. 7: 25. *m* 5: 8, 14.  
*n* Ver. 4. *o* 5: 12; 1 Chron. 16: 27, 28; 29: 10-12; Neh. 9: 5, 6.  
*p* Gen. 1: 1; Heb. 3: 4. *q* Prov. 16: 4; Rom. 11: 36.

render the Greek term for **calf** by ox (*Exod. 22: 1*).

8. Here we have a further description of the living creatures and their worship. The **six wings** (*comp. Isa. 6*) indicate swiftness. The eyes indicate great intelligence. **Day and night** reveals the untiring energy that rejoices in constant praise. The three-fold praise, **Holy, holy, holy**, may indicate a threefold distinction in the person of the Godhead, hinted at in the Old Testament, revealed fully in the New Testament. God is defined in a three-fold way, the one who had no beginning, the present one, the one who is to be made manifest in the future. While there is no allusion to Christ, the close union of Christ with God, and his second coming taken together, form this expression: **and is to come** (<sup>1: 8</sup>). Heaven is a place of worship.

9-11. **THE SONG OF HEAVEN.** The four creatures give unceasing praise to God on the throne. The redeemed from the earth follow in praise. They praise him especially for his creative power, in that through him all things began to be and exist (*ver. 9-11*).

9, 10. The Revised version renders, *And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that liveth forever and ever, the twenty-four elders shall fall down.* The future tense is not unlikely a frequentative,

meaning as often as they lead in praise the twenty-four elders will follow in praise. The living creatures lead in the worship. They give a threefold service, **glory, honor, thanks.** The elders express their homage in a three-fold way, they **fall down**, they **worship**, they **cast their crowns** before him. They are high in station; but a vast gulf separates them from the infinite Creator. Their crowns, either as kings or conquerors, they ascribe to him. What they are, he graciously made them.

11. We have the words of praise, **Thou art... power**, rather, *Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor, and the power.* He receives praise as Creator; the praise for redemption comes out in the further vision. **For... created**, rather, *For thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.* God is praised as creator of all things.

**NOTE.—Symbols as teachers.** In the Old Testament great stress is laid upon teaching by symbols. The books of Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel, Jeremiah, contain illustrations of this method of teaching. The tabernacle and the temple were, in their entirety, symbolic teachings. The altar which the man entering first faced announced

*The sealed book to be opened by the Redeemer;  
songs of praise to him.*

### 5 AND I saw in the right hand of him

the man's sin. The laver declared that no unholy man could meet God. The altar of incense affirmed the acceptance of prayer. The shewbread and the lamp revealed the strength and joy of God's fellowship. In the holiest of all God dwelt in a symbolic way; there was access to him through a mediator, and forgiveness through the blood. The entire gospel was announced through the structure of the building erected according to God's plan.

When God would announce the future of his church, and the character of the heavenly life, this is done through figures and symbols. That God reigns in the universe is shown by a throne. That God is faithful to his promise is shown by the rainbow. That God is the center of the moral universe is shown by the worship rendered him by all creatures; God's hidden purposes is manifested by a sealed book. The unfolding of the future, and of the realities of the unseen life, may be given more impressively and often in a plainer way by figures than by words. The problem before the reader of this book is to ascertain what the symbols mean.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Heaven is not a sealed place to us. Though no one on earth has ever seen it, we may be thankful that a door is opened into it through Jesus Christ (ver. 1).

2. God is the supreme ruler of the universe. No one can break down his throne, though men may make war upon him, forget him, deny his existence. God remains God, and will hold his enemies in derision (ver. 2; Ps. 2).

3. God is not simply holiness and justice, else there would be no salvation for us. He is not all mercy, else punishment would not come. As all the primary colors make the white, so all moral qualities give him a nature pure and unspotted (ver. 3).

4. The redeemed of all ages will find their home in heaven, in God's immediate presence. They pass out of imperfect lives into lives of purity, and are crowned

### 5 AND I saw, in the right hand of him

as conquerors. Every age will contribute its share to the heavenly host (ver. 4).

5. God's thunderings have no terror for his children. They abide under the shadow of his wings His throne is one of grace and help for his people (ver. 5).

6. The highest qualities of mind are needed in God's service—courage, endurance, wisdom, high aspiration. One talent rightly used is better than ten talents unused (ver. 7).

7. God is worthy of receiving honor from men and thanks. Worship is becoming to us, and acceptable to him. Heaven is full of praise, for it is full of the sense of God's goodness.

## CHAPTER V.

In the preceding chapter we had a sight of the Almighty God on his throne, surrounded by living creatures and the redeemed, in worship. We now have a sight of Jesus in a twofold relation to God and his own people.

We stand at the portals of the main thought of the book, the unfolding of the course of the Redeemer's cause on the earth. Jesus, the Redeemer, that mighty one seen in vision in 1:13-18, is again seen actively engaged for his people, in opening to them their future, and in leading the way to triumph. Three persons stand out conspicuously: God the Father, giving to the Son the revelation of things to come, making disclosures of the divine plan; Jesus the Mediator, that one who through the entire course of human history is the middle man between God and man; John the revelator, seeing in symbol the divine thoughts, and showing them to us.

We have in this chapter the sealed roll (ver. 1-5); Jesus opening the roll (ver. 6, 7); the resultant heavenly songs of the living creatures, the angels, the entire creation (ver. 8-14).

#### 1-5. THE SEALED ROLL.

1. In his spiritually uplifted state, through the opened door, John sees upon the throne the Almighty, and upon the open palm of his right hand, a roll. It is on his **right hand**, the

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  
 3 thereof? \*And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look

*r* Ezek. 2 : 9, 10.

*s* 6 : 1; Isa. 29 : 11; Dan. 12 : 4.

who sat on the throne, a book written within and on the back, sealed up with 2 seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose its seals?

- 3 And no one was able, in heaven, nor on the earth, nor under the earth, to open the book, or to look thereon.

*t* Isa. 40 : 13, 14; 63 : 5; Rom. 11 : 34.

symbol of authority. God's power is to be used in the furtherance of his cause; his authority, as revealed, is to be maintained. We have the same thought expressed in 1 : 1: "The revelation which God gave unto him." Through this book we see the unfolding of God's mind. **A book**, rather, *roll*, like one of the sacred rolls used in the temple or synagogue. **Written**

... **back side**, rather, *written within and on the back*. This was done in order to utilize to the fullest extent the parchment, writing on both sides. Writings of this kind were called "*Opistographs*." A roll thus written would indicate, in a symbolic way, that there being no further space for writing, the roll contains the entire mind of God concerning this matter. God's purpose is full and complete, to his knowledge there is no addition. John sees the roll and, observing it intently, sees the writing on the outside. For a like revelation, see Ezek. 2 : 10. **Sealed with seven seals**, rather, *close sealed*. It is a matter of course that no one may know the future, it remains hidden from us. The **seven** indicates the complete impenetrability of the future, apart from the revelation granted by God. God knows the end from the beginning. We may conceive of the roll having the seals on the end of the roll, visible to the eye, so that one being broken the roll may be partially unfolded. We may infer nothing of the length of time signified by the successive seals, nor the time when the fulfilment begins. At the breaking of one seal a part of God's purpose is made known; each successive seal adds to our knowledge of his revealed will. What is meant by the roll? It is not the book of life spoken of in 13 : 8; 21 : 27, a book that belongs exclusively to the Lamb. The roll is not the record of all things, according to which all will be judged (20 : 17). It

represents here the purpose of God concerning his cause on the earth. We have no record of John reading in the book as the seals are broken. But we may believe that the apocalypse itself, as we have it before us, in its rich and impressive imagery, represents substantially the contents of the roll. For instances of the seal see Isa. 29 : 11; Dan. 12 : 4.

2. The completeness of the sealing is shown in this verse. **A strong angel**, there are differing grades among the angelic host (<sup>1</sup> Peter 3 : 22). This is one of God's mighty ones, in God's behalf showing the futility of human wisdom to reveal God's plans. It is a cry to the universe of created things in behalf of the Creator. **Who is worthy** in character, in power, in knowledge to make known the future of God's people? In ancient contests a herald appeared, making known the greatness of his cause and challenging to combat. See the story of Goliath (1 Sam. 17).

3. The mighty champion of God finds no response. The living creatures, the elders, the angels, were finite creatures, they could not break open God's plans. The result is, **no man**, rather, *no one* among those living in heaven or on the earth or among the dead could be found. **Under the earth** does not have reference to the spirits of the lost, but means the dead in a general way. Placed in the ground they are looked upon as having gone down into the regions below. The voice of the angel is thought of as reaching all parts of the universe. God is seen to be God dwelling in his unapproachableness. Sometimes prophets declared the future, but it was only through God's inspiring Spirit. No one was worthy even to look upon the roll as if to read the fragmentary writing on the outside.

4. John preserves his identity and

4 thereon. "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, <sup>x</sup>the Lion of the tribe of Juda, <sup>y</sup>the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, <sup>z</sup>and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts,

4 And I was weeping much, beeause no one was found worthy to open the 5 book, or to look thereon. And one of the elders says to me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, prevailed to open the book, and its seven seals. 6 And I saw, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and

<sup>x</sup> Dan. 7 : 15, 16.

<sup>y</sup> Gen. 49 : 9; Reb. 7 : 14.

<sup>z</sup> Ver. 1; 6 : 1; Matt. 28 : 18.

consciousness in his uplifted state. Loving the churches among which he ministered, with desires raised to a high degree to know the history of the church, greatly longing to see the kingdom widened into a universal sovereignty, and seeing that no one is found even to look upon the roll, he **wept much**. Daniel, under like circumstances, fasted, sitting in sackcloth and ashes (Dan. 9 : 3). No mere curiosity prompted his desire to know the contents of the roll; he desired to see Christ enthroned as Lord among men. The **I**, in the Greek, is emphatic, "**I**, for my part, wept much." He was anxious, having seen the great God on his throne, to know his mind concerning the outcome of the struggles on the earth. The proclamation of the angel showed God's conception of the tremendous import and worth of the things contained in the roll; the silence showed the limitations of all creaturely life to understand God's mysteries.

5. Comfort comes from one of the representatives of the redeemed. The elders, representing the redeemed from the earth, would naturally sympathize with John more than the angels or the living creatures. The redeemed church makes known God's kind intentions. The church is not divided, the church on earth and the church in heaven having a common sympathy for each other, arising from the love for a common Christ. Jesus is described in a twofold way, the **Lion of the tribe of Juda** (see Gen. 49 : 9), alluding to his human descent from Judah; **the Root of David**, alluding, not to his divine nature, but the sprout springing from David that shall grow into a stately tree (1sa. 11 : 1). Jesus is a descendant of David, the man of war; is of the tribe of Judah, the lionlike tribe. In his heavenly life he is de-

scribed in terms indicative of his human character and life. This one **hath prevailed**, rather, **overcame**. The overcoming referred to is the overcoming in the mediatorial life, the overcoming of temptation, the wiles of Satan, the power of sin and death, the removal of guilt, the defeat of Satan, and his ultimate suppression, so far as God's people are concerned, the introduction of righteousness, involving the exaltation of Jesus himself and his people through him. He is **worthy to open the book-roll—and the seals**. Omit **to loose**. No one in heaven so enters into sympathy with God's cause and people on the earth, has such power and knowledge as to unfold the future, and to lead in the development of God's cause upon the earth. Jesus is meek and lowly toward the penitent, but he is also, in reference to government and leadership, the conqueror, the lionlike leader, the holy David, the man of conquest.

6, 7. JESUS OPENING THE ROLL. The main thought of the preceding verses is the sealed roll. It contained God's thoughts concerning his kingdom, but no one was found worthy to open it. A new person now appears, Jesus, whom John had seen on the earth, on whose bosom he had lain. He again appears as in 1 : 13, but in a symbolic way.

6. The position of Jesus in the scene indicates his lofty nature. He was close to the throne, **in the midst of the throne**. This book everywhere joins the Father and the Lamb in an inseparable worship (5 : 13). On earth he could not be numbered among men, in heaven he cannot be classed with created things—even the highest. To him the Old Covenant pointed; from him the New Covenant came. He is the express image of the person of God

and in the midst of the elders, stood <sup>a</sup>a Lamb as it had been slain, <sup>b</sup>having seven horns and <sup>c</sup>seven eyes, which are <sup>d</sup>the seven Spirits of God, sent <sup>7</sup>forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand <sup>e</sup>of him that sat upon the throne.

in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the <sup>7</sup>earth. And he came, and has taken it out of the right hand of him who sits

*a* Ver. 9, 12; 13:8; Isa. 53:7; John 1:29; Heb. 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19.

*b* Dan. 7:14.

*c* 2 Chron. 16:9; Zech. 3:9; 4:10.

*d* 1:4; 4:5.

*e* 4:2.

(Heb. 1:3); in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). Notice the high position accorded to Jesus in his person and work in Col. 1:13-20. In form he appears as a **Lamb**. This word, occurring twenty-eight times in this book, differs from the word used in other parts of the New Testament, except in John 21:15. It is a neuter noun, a diminutive in form, used perhaps in an endearing sense. Jesus conquered as a lion because he was a lamb in nature. John had pointed to Jesus, in the Jordan Valley, as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). The lamb is indicative of passiveness, of purity, of sacrifice. Here the chief significance of the Lamb is that it presents the appearance *as it had been slain*, rather, *as though it had been sacrificed*. The expression has reference to the sacrificial death of the Lamb. The words *as though* do not intimate that the sacrifice had been in appearance only. It had been a real sacrifice which John himself had witnessed (John 19:26). The fact of the sacrifice is spoken of elsewhere in this book, "The first and the last and the living One became dead" (1:18). There was upon the Lamb the mark of its having been offered. Jesus, on coming from the grave, bore the marks of the nails and the spear, thereby declaring his identity and showing the means whereby he secured for us salvation. He has all power, as shown by the **seven horns**. The horn is the symbol of power. (See 1 Kings 22:11; Zech. 1:18.) Jesus claimed the possession of all power (Matt. 28:18). He has **seven eyes**, indicating completeness of intelligence. Among the Egyptians the eye was the symbol of omniscience. This book needs to be read in the light of the Old Testament imagery. For a reference to the seven eyes, see Zech. 3:9; 4:10.

7. There is in Jesus the full sense of a personal worthiness, also a full de-

termination. He had heard the challenge of the strong angel. When no one responded, then he responded. There is here a giving on the part of God, a receiving on the part of Jesus. Jesus is the mediator between God and the church. He was mediator when on earth, he is mediator in heaven. There is a oneness of mind between the various persons of the Godhead. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). **He took**, rather, *hath taken*. These words imply the keeping of the roll in his possession. He retains the roll in order that he may execute the judgments here portrayed on the enemies of the church; that he may lead the church to its ultimate universal conquests. He overcame in his own person; he must now lead his followers and his church to a like overcoming.

**8-14. THE SONGS IN HEAVEN.** There is a thrill of joy in heaven when Jesus takes the book, giving assurance to the redeemed that their cause is his cause. There is first the song of the living creatures and the elders (ver. 8-10). Everything about the unseen life is based upon reason. Naturally the redeemed would be most interested in the progress and outcome of the Redeemer's work. There is in their worship and love an element that cannot belong to the angelic worship. The song of the angels is found in ver. 11, 12.

In the central part of the scene is the Almighty Father on the throne, the ever-blessed Lamb, who has achieved redemption, the light-giving Spirit with his sevenfold light, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders, the highest of creaturely beings, and the redeemed from all the ages. Now we get a sight of the angelic throng. Jesus assures us that the angels rejoice over every enlargement of his kingdom (Luke 15:10).

**8** And when he had taken the book, <sup>t</sup>the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them <sup>s</sup>harps, and golden vials full of odours, <sup>b</sup>which are the prayers of saints. And <sup>i</sup>they sung a new song, saying,

*f* 4 : 8, 10.

*g* 14 : 2; 15 : 2.

*h* 8 : 3, 4; Ps. 141 : 2.

*i* 14 : 3; Ps. 98 : 1.

**8** on the throne. And when he took the book, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders, fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. **9** And they sing a new song, saying,

The song of all created things is found in ver. 13.

There is now a widening of the circle. Begun by the creatures and the elders, taken up by the angels, embracing thus the entire sentient holy creation, the song is now taken up by the material creation. It is a beautiful and sublime representation. The existence of evil men shut up in their place of banishment (Matt. 25 : 46); of Satan to be shut up finally (Rev. 20 : 10); of nature yet suffering under the curse of sin (Rom. 8 : 21); these things are not thought of in that glad hour, when God is praised.

**8.** Those nearest the throne, the living creatures and the elders, begin the songs of praise. The *harp* is a reminiscence of the earthly temple, the symbol of praise. It is probable that in this praise and worship the elders take the leadership as being more immediately concerned, sharing, as the living creatures do not, in the benefits of Christ's redemption. It is probable also that the living creatures join in the song in sympathy with the redeemed, themselves servants of God and rejoicing in the honor given to the Lamb. The *harp* stands for praise. If heaven be made intelligible to us it must be through representations that have a meaning to us in our earthly life. **Golden vials**, rather, *golden bowls*; that is, open vessels like saucers. **Odours**, rather, *incense*. In the temple worship the altar of incense, the ascending smoke, and the odor filling the sanctuary, were pictures of the moral beauty of prayer, with its power to reach God and influence God's revelations to man. While the smoke of the incense ascended, prayers went up to God. (See Luke 1 : 9, 10; Ps. 141 : 2.) The temple worship in all its parts was a visible teaching of God's truth, and a help to the spiritual life. The **prayers of saints** refers, not to the saints in heaven, but to the saints on earth. Heaven is preeminently a place of

praise. The saints in heaven may join their prayers with the saints on earth that God's will may be done gladly and universally. The prayers of earth are represented as brought to the notice of God through the living creatures and the elders. We are not to infer that there is any medium between the believer's praying to God direct in the name of Jesus (John 14 : 13). Direct prayer to God is also taught in this book (19 : 10; 22 : 8, 9). The Roman Church teaches that we are to pray to the saints in heaven. But this is against the express teaching of Jesus that we are to pray to God direct, and it would imply also their omnipresence if prayer to them were to be effective. That the elders have anything to do in the presentation of our prayers to God cannot be affirmed from this passage. All that it means is that our prayers reach God, are a source of delight to him, are effective in bringing about results. If, in a figurative way, it is to be shown that our prayers are set before him, it must be through some such agency as that of the elders or other intelligent creatures. They are not here represented as interceding for the saints on the earth. It is here taught that prayers have great influence in heaven, in deciding the course of earthly affairs. Coming out of troubled hearts, seemingly wasted, they are treasured up, they bring about triumphs on the earth, they hasten the coming of the kingdom. In answer to their prayers the Lamb took the book, to reveal words of comfort in the impending judgments upon his foes and the deliverance for his church and faithful friends.

**9, 10.** **Sung**, rather, *sing*, expressing the continued song of praise. Their adoration continues throughout eternity (4 : 9, 10). On earth there are many breaks in the song; joy gives way to sorrow; in heaven the song is continuous. The **new song** is in con-

\* 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.

*k* 4:11.    *l* 14:4; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; Acts 20:28; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12.  
*m* 7:9; John 10:16.    *n* 1:6; 20:6; Dan. 7:18, 27; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.

trust with the old song, celebrating the creative power and wisdom of God, given before (4:11). The new song celebrates the fact of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the redemption wrought through him. It will be an ever-new song because it reveals perpetually the blessedness and ever-widening salvation that comes to the redeemed soul. It is new also in that it announces the pending triumphs of the Lamb over his enemies and his conquests on the earth, ending in complete victory. It is a distinct advance over the matters contained in the songs of chapter IV. Five things are asserted in the song: that Jesus has achieved a redemption for his people; that this redemption is by means of the sacrifice of himself; that its results are seen among all nations; that Jesus has exalted his people to a royal and priestly rank; that he therefore is worthy to take the book and reveal its contents. Jesus has **redeemed** men, that is, has bought them as in 1 Cor. 6:20. They had been in bondage, they are now freed from that bondage and brought into a new relation to God. Jesus, using a different term, speaks of a ransom for men (Matt. 20:28). The method of redemption is through the blood, the sacrifice on the earth. Jesus teaches the same truth that salvation is through the blood (Matt. 26:28). The word **us** should be omitted, the living creatures were not redeemed by the blood. The elders, representing all the redeemed of all ages, owe their salvation to Christ. The benefits of his death avail to all believers, both before and after the coming of Christ (Rev. 13:8; Heb. 9:15). The width of the saving work of Christ is seen in saving men from every **kindred, tribe, tongue, people, nation**. The fourfold terms used indicate the world-wide mission and effect-

Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open its seals; because thou wast slain, and didst redeem to God by thy blood out of every tribe, and tongue, 10 and people, and nation; and didst make them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they will reign on the earth.

wideness of Christ's work. Gentiles and Jews alike are saved by the blood of a common Saviour. Jesus speaks of the wideness of his work (Matt. 8:11).

There's a wideness in God's mercy  
Like the wideness of the sea.

There is an elevation to a glorified life. It is a royal life, exalted, full of dignity and honor—sharing in Christ's royalty. It is also a priestly life, embracing the ideas of holiness of character, nearness of access to God, consecration to service, helping in the widening of Christ's cause on the earth, making sacrifices of thanksgiving. Because of his sacrifice Jesus is declared to be worthy to take the book and open it. God highly exalted Jesus because of his sacrifice (Phil. 2:6-11). Men ought to exalt Christ, making him their supreme Lord, even as God has highly exalted him. The entire passage should read: *Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests. And we shall reign on the earth, rather, and they reign upon the earth.* It is a present reigning here spoken of. The redeemed of the Lord are at present in fellowship with Christ, they share in his work, in his final conquest. There is a present reign and kingship of Christ (1 Peter 3:22). This book reveals the final triumph over all his foes. As kings and priests on the earth they have a share with Christ in an ever-widening spread of the kingdom. All things are in process of being subjected to Christ, being placed under his feet (1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 10:13). This reigning will be more and more manifest in time. At present seeming defeats mark the

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; 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,

*o 4 : 4, 6.*

*p Ps. 68 : 17; Dan. 7 : 10; Heb. 12 : 22.*

*q 4 : 11; Matt. 28 : 18; Phil. 2 : 9-11.*

*r Ps. 96 : 11-13; 148; Isa. 42 : 5-13.*

course of Christ's cause, but in time all will acknowledge his sway (Phil. 2 : 10, 11). Sometimes that which will be completely true in time is spoken of as if it had already come to pass. In this way Christians are called saints (Phil. 1 : 1); they are spoken of as if without sin (1 John 3 : 6); they are regarded as already possessing all things (1 Cor. 3 : 22). The elders praise the Lamb on account of the glories of redemption viewed in itself, and the consequent triumphs that come from it upon the earth. Heaven and Christianity would not be, if it were not for the crucified and glorified Christ.

11. **I beheld**, rather, *I saw*. As he looked he heard. The angels, perhaps, form a complete circle about the throne, or a semi-circle, that they might see the more clearly the One upon the throne. They are farther from the throne as not so immediately concerned in the progress of Christ's cause on the earth as the redeemed from the earth. There is a bond of nearness between Christ who came into a life in the flesh, and those who came into heaven from the life on the earth. The angels are a distinct order of beings—holy, intelligent, active in God's service, the term meaning messenger. John gives the impression made upon him as that of vast numbers (Dan. 7 : 20). The angels did not join in the praise to God as creator (4 : 10); they now join in the praise to Christ as redeemer. There is a higher evidence of God's wisdom and power in redemption than in creation. The one involves moral and spiritual power, the other physical might.

11 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels, around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain, to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea,

12. This verse has the angelic song. It is with a **loud voice** they sing, showing thus their intense admiration and love. They rejoice that one so worthy is to receive the highest honors of the upper kingdom. The worthiest there is the highest; it is often otherwise here. It is a sevenfold praise they give to him. They praise him as the **Lamb**, the one sacrificed for men. **Was slain**, rather, *hath been slain*. **Power**, rather, *the power*. The article, *the*, belongs to each of the seven terms of adoration. He is regarded as the almighty, full of all the riches of glory, the wise ruler, whose might is shown in overcoming all opposition, deserving of honor, worship, praise. Jesus is regarded, by the angels, as the manifested God (John 14 : 7). If angels praise Christ for his redeeming love (Luke 15 : 7; 1 Peter 1 : 12), how much more should men for whose sins Christ died. Some of the hymns of earth can be sung in heaven :

All hail the power of Jesus' name,  
Let angels prostrate fall.

13. **Every creature**, rather, *every created thing*. The far-off star, whose light requires years to reach us, the smallest object about us, everything John heard praising God. **In the sea**, rather, *on the sea*, meaning marine animals, not including intelligent creatures, such as sailors. **Under the earth** does not here mean persons under the earth, looked upon as the habitation of the dead, but is a designation of a part of creation. The aim is to show that the entire creation, in all its parts, gives praise to God. All

and all that are in them, heard I saying,

<sup>6</sup>Blessing, and honour, and glory,

and power,

*Be unto him* <sup>7</sup>that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb,

For ever and ever.

14 <sup>8</sup>And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four <sup>9</sup>and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him <sup>10</sup>that liveth for ever and ever.

and all that are in them, I heard saying, To him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the might, forever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped.

s 1 : 6; 1 Chron. 29 : 11; Rom. 9 : 5; 1 Tim. 6 : 16; Heb. 13 : 21; 1 Peter 5 : 11; Jude 25.  
t 4 : 2, 3; 6 : 16; 7 : 10. u 19 : 4. x 4 : 9, 10.

**that are in them**, rather, *all things that are in them*. The entire passage must be understood in a figurative and poetical way. In Ps. 145 the sun, moon, stars, the snow, and hail are called upon to give praise to God. **Blessing and honour**, rather, *the blessing and the honor*. The article, *the*, is to be repeated with each term. **Power**, rather, *dominion*. Jesus is worthy of all that the world has of praise and honor. He should be made, by a voluntary choice, the supreme Lord of the earth as he is of the angels. Creation came from God, it was made through Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, its laws are God's ways of thinking and working, it was obedient to the command of Jesus, it shall, through the sacrifice of the Lamb, be delivered from its bondage and be introduced into a glorious condition (Rom. 8 : 21; 2 Peter 3 : 18). The study of nature should not lead to the hiding of the personality of God, the Creator; should not beget agnosticism, or atheism. According to the vision here granted to John, Jesus must be divine in his nature. The Lamb is joined in the worship with the Father. It is not conceivable that, to the mind of a reverent Jew, the name of any created being, however high, could be associated in the worship of God, unless he also were regarded as divine, in the strictest sense.

**14.** The response of the creatures and the elders. When the angels and all the holy creation have rendered praise to God, the living creatures give a response. They began the song in 4 : 8-10, praising God for his creative power. The universal praise to God and the Lamb awakens a gracious responsive utterance. They unite in saying, **Amen.** In heaven all is unity.

On earth there are discords and divisions. Jesus gathers things together, while sin scatters (Matt. 12 : 30). The redeemed church, **the elders**, said nothing, it fell down and worshiped. The passage reads: *And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped*. Omit **him that liveth forever and ever**. Heaven is a place of holy character, of active service, of devout worship. Without these it would not be the Scripture heaven. It is, first of all, a holy condition of heart, and then a holy place for the holy heart. An ungodly man, in whose heart is no spirit of worship, would not find heaven a delightful place.

**NOTE.—Salvation through sacrifice.** The distinct teaching of the Old Testament is that forgiveness and salvation come through the blood of sacrifice. The altar and the priest stand out prominently on every page of the older Scriptures. The opening of Bible history reveals the wilful sin of man, his guilt, and the method of forgiveness through a sacrifice divinely established. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah portrays a suffering Messiah and forgiveness through his stripes. Daniel and Zechariah speak of a Messiah cut off for his people. The book of Hebrews (9 : 22) affirms that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Jesus expressly taught that salvation is possible through his death. His blood is for forgiveness (Matt. 26 : 28). Toward the close of his ministry three times Jesus asserted the necessity for his dying (Mark 9 : 31; 10 : 39, 45). After his resurrection he affirmed the same moral necessity for his sufferings (Luke 24 : 26). The great New Testament teachers, Paul and Peter, unite in de-

elaring that salvation comes not through refined human character, but through Christ's atoning death (*Rom. 3:24; 1 Peter 3:18*). The song of heaven declares that salvation is due to Christ's mediatorial work. No name is heard in heaven but that of Jesus. Praise is given to Christ, not as teacher, wonder worker, or sinless person, but to him as the one who redeemed men through his blood.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. God has thoughts and plans concerning his people. It is well for God's cause that it has God to care for it (ver. 1, 2).

2. God is very high above all his creatures. Even in heaven there will always be ignorance and weakness when measured by God's knowledge and holiness (ver. 3).

3. A good man is interested in the progress of the kingdom, sorrows over its hindrances, rejoices over its triumphs. The attitude of the heart toward the triumph of Christ's cause reveals what the man is in the heart (ver. 4).

4. Jesus, in heaven, is the friend of the church on the earth. Jesus is revealed in heaven as the conquering Christ. His cause on the earth will not be finally defeated because he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (ver. 5).

5. Jesus Christ is all in all to the Christian. He is this because he is the Saviour who died. He did not remain dead, but has the power of an endless life with God. When no one could help, Jesus stood forth the mighty mediator between them and God (ver. 6).

6. The cause of Christ is not committed to the hands of strong leaders among men nor to angels. The execution of God's thoughts of love for his people is placed in the hands of Jesus. He has the roll in his hands, and has the names of his people on his heart (ver. 7).

7. Heaven is a place of praise. On earth Paul could sing even in a jail. The saints could find songs in the night-time. But in heaven the harp is never hung on the willow. Each one will have his own harp (ver. 8).

8. Prayers are delightful to God and efficacious in producing results. A prayer meeting may seem ineffective and dull,

but it may influence heaven, and turn the course of history. Every Christian may be an Israel, having power with God and man (ver. 8).

9. In heaven they worship Jesus because he is the Saviour. His redemption has a world-wide efficacy, in bringing to glory men from every nation. Heaven will not be an empty place; from all countries men will crowd into it (ver. 9).

10. Christians have in them now the beginnings of the blessedness and glory of the heavenly life. Even now they reign, when on the earth. The future, with its blessedness, belongs to the Christian. The earth, and all God's possessions, shall be theirs. The unpardoned sinner will be very poor and desolate (ver. 10).

11. The angels are countless in number. They may be of more service to Christ's cause than we know or think. They helped Jesus in his time of need (*Luke 22:43*); they may, unknown to us, help us. They take a deep interest in the conversion of men, for the sake of Christ (ver. 11).

12. Nothing is too good to give to Jesus. We shall please Christ by thinking rightly about him, by rendering praise to him, by giving him the place in our heart and life that he deserves. He is worthy of being exalted to supreme rulership in each life. He is worthy of our time, our influence, our money. Our plans, our beliefs, our conduct must be made to conform to the will of Christ (ver. 12).

13. Only intelligent creatures are capable of disobeying God. Nature submits to his will without hesitation (ver. 13).

14. In heaven they understand Jesus, and accord him divine honors. On earth many mistakenly refuse to regard him as divine. Heaven is wiser than earth in thinking rightly about Jesus, and in making Jesus supreme in their lives (ver. 13).

**SECTION IV.—THE OPENING OF THE SEALS.** Chap. VI.—VIII.—We have now reached that point in the apocalypse where the main thought of the book begins to unfold. The sealed roll is unfolded little by little. The apocalypse has three complete courses of symbolic representations: the seals,

the trumpets, the vials or bowls. These run parallel with each other, presenting the same course of history viewed under differing aspects. The seals represent the providence of God toward the church, a parabolic history of Christ's kingdom. We must consider the seals, the trumpets, the bowls, not as describing certain events in a chronological succession so that the trumpets follow the seals in order of time, but all of them covering the same space of time. This will be evident from a view of the three placed side by side:

## THE SEALS.

## CHAPTER VI.

1. All have
2. reference
3. to the
4. earth.

## THE TRUMPETS.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1. All have
2. reference
3. to the
4. earth.

## THE BOWLS.

## CHAPTER XVI.

1. All have
2. reference
3. to the
4. earth.

It will be noticed at a glance that there is a similarity of structure, showing conclusively that these are not successive periods of time, but synchronal periods. Whatever the opening of the seals reveals, the same teachings, in other aspects, are contained in the corresponding trumpets and bowls. The entire book is constructed in a highly artistic way. In the seven seals, a perfect number, is the unfolding, in a complete way, of God's action in behalf of his church. In the seven trumpets, a perfect number, is the unfolding, in a complete way, of God's action toward a wicked world. In the seven bowls, a perfect number, is the unfolding, in a complete manner, of God's action toward a degenerate church. It is one God, revealing in vision his actions under differing aspects in behalf of his cause on the earth. The first group brings us to the end. The next two groups, so far at least, begin at the beginning, that they present to us the evil world and the degenerate church as exposed through all their history to the just judgments of God. There have always been in the world a church of Christ, dear to him, a wicked and ungodly world, and a church, to some extent, a corrupt and degenerate church. It is noticeable that at the end of each of these three groups of visions is a great earthquake (6:12; 11:13; 16:18). (For further consideration, see Introduction.)

Many of our Lord's parables, those of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the talents, present the divine kingdom under varying aspects, and also show a progressive advancement and final issue. In the visions of Daniel there is also an unfolding of the divine plans under varying figures. In this series the conqueror goes forth on his mission of conquest; at the seventh seal we have an utter silence, when the thunders of God's throne have ceased to sound (4:5), inasmuch as all opposition is broken down. There is in this

series the conception of completeness presented in two symbolic ways, the term seven, and the silence ushered in by the last seal (8:1). But there is room for supplemental revelations, inasmuch as in the seals everything is presented in masses. We do not see the definite agencies at work, and many things are unexplained. Under the fifth seal we see the souls of the martyred dead, but we have had no notice of any persecution. In the after parts of the book in the sixth trumpet (11:7) we behold the servants of Christ witnessing unto death. Thus the various lines of visions correspond in time, and they also supplement each other. It is noticeable how each section brings us over the same course, and brings us to the same close viewed under differing aspects.

The series of the seals brings us to a close (8:1) when there is silence, all opposition having broken down and Christ is triumphant.

The series of the trumpets brings us to a like close in 11:15, when it is announced that the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of Christ.

The series of the bowls brings us to a final closing in 16:17, when the voice from heaven declares "It is done."

The fall of Babylon brings us to a close in 19:7, "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready."

*The sealed book—Opening of the first six seals.*

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:

y 5 : 5-7. z 4 : 7.

6 AND I saw, when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as a voice of thunder, Come. And I saw, and beheld a white horse, and

a 19 : 7-16; Zech. 6 : 3.

The fall of all the outward foes of Christ, and the forces against Christ, also introduces the end in 20 : 14. Compare Swete, Introduction, p. xxix ff.

## CHAPTER VI.

The course of Christ's cause on the earth is here presented in a symbolic way. The Lamb having taken the roll now proceeds to open it part by part, breaking seal after seal. In the vision John beholds the breaking of the seals. There is a gradualness in the unfolding of the teachings. We have here, as the personal activities and agencies, the Redeemer, the four living creatures, the souls of the martyrs, the various operations signified by the opening seals. The chapter falls naturally into two divisions. The first four seals constitute one division, the closing three the second.

1, 2. **THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SEAL.** There is no break, in time, between the close of the song in chapter V and the breaking of the seals. The Lamb, in his character of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, begins to unfold the history of redemption in its origin, its hindrances, its spread, its final triumph on the earth.

1. **The Lamb opened one of the seals,** rather, *one of the seven seals.* And I heard . . . see, rather, *And I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come.* The one of the four refers, in all likelihood, to the lion which is mentioned first in 4 : 7. There is an incongruity, in an artistic view, in depicting the lion as speaking. But the vision regards things, not in an artistic aspect, but in a moral aspect. There were thunderings proceeding from the throne (4 : 5), indicative of God's judgments about to come upon a guilty world. The voice of the creature is like thunder in its volume. Omit, and see. The creature utters one word, *Come.* This is not addressed

to John in order to bring him nearer, otherwise it would not be repeated again and again. It is not addressed to the Lord Jesus as if the expectant creatures and the church were waiting for his coming a second time, as in 22 : 17, 20. It is an appeal for the horseman to come forth, an appeal for the hidden future to reveal itself. This is in accord with the spirit of the entire passage, and with the resulting appearance. There is an expectant attitude on the part of the church, the desire for his coming to avenge his cause, to manifest his glory, and take to himself, in an outward way, the authority that rightly belongs to him. But this cannot be the meaning here. The *thunder* may indicate, as it often does in this book, not simply the arresting of attention, but the accompanying judgments.

2. The answer comes at once. There came a vision. No word apparently was uttered, but every part of the vision had significance. A **white horse** appears. White is largely used in this book as a symbol of purity, holiness; also of conquest, of victory. There is a white throne (20 : 11); there are white robes (7 : 9). In 19 : 11 we have the appearance of a rider on a white horse, where it is no other than the glorified Redeemer in his course of resistless conquest. But here we can understand not a conqueror in a merely earthly sense, either in civil strife or foreign conquest, but a holy being or a holy cause.

Professor Ramsay believes that the rider on the "white horse" represents the Parthian king, and that commentators, who try to force a Roman meaning on this figure, are mistaken. But Swete (p. 335) says that white horses were, on occasions, used in Roman triumphant processions, and quotes Plutarch and Dion Cassius. He sees in "the white horse" a picture of "triumphant militarism," and thinks "a vision of the victorious Christ would

<sup>b</sup> 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, <sup>d</sup> I heard the second beast say,  
4 Come and see. <sup>e</sup> And there went out  
another horse *that was red* : and *power*  
was given to him that sat thereon <sup>f</sup> to  
take peace from the earth, and that  
they should kill one another : and

he who sat on him had a bow ; and a  
crown was given to him ; and he came  
forth conquering, and to conquer.

3 And when he opened the second seal,  
I heard the second living creature say-  
ing, Come. And there came forth  
another horse, a red horse, and to him  
who sat thereon it was given to take  
away peace from the earth, and that  
they should slay one another ; and

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 45 : 3-5.

<sup>c</sup> 14 : 14; Dan. 7 : 14.

<sup>d</sup> 4 : 7.

<sup>e</sup> Zech. 6 : 2.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. 10 : 34; Luke 12 : 49, 51.

be inappropriate at the opening of a series which symbolizes bloodshed, famine, and pestilence." But Moses in his song (*Exod. 15 : 3*) says: "Jehovah is a man of war." (Comp. *Exod. 14 : 14*; *Deut. 7 : 1, 2*; *Rev. 19 : 13-16*.) In regard to the white horse and rider, whether a Parthian, Roman, or Old Testament symbol, it need not be used slavishly, but freely, as a common form in a new way, to suit new conditions.

The Cambridge Bible suggests that these four riders signify the woes that precede Christ's final coming; that the white horse signifies a conquest that may be beneficial in its nature. But in that event there would be no distinctive difference between the white horse and the red horse of the second seal. In each of the first four seals a horse appears: the symbol of motion, of activity; of war also, as in the Old Testament times the horse was used for war purposes. The Old Testament foundation for this imagery is found in *Zech. 6 : 1-8*, where four horses appear—black, white, grizzled, bay or red. **He that sat on him.** If this has reference to a person, then it will be needful to designate each of the other riders as a definite person. In no case is a definite person meant, but rather a cause, a principle, an agency. The **bow** is, for the times, a symbol of war. In vision a **crown** is given to him, a crown of conquest, of royalty. His purpose in coming forth is shown in **conquering and to conquer**. He marched on to victory. When the struggle is over, the foe is crushed. The Old Testament speaks of the Lord as a mighty conqueror, beating down all opposition (*Ps. 2 ; 64 : 7-9*; *110 : 3*; *Isa. 26 : 9*).

**3, 4. THE OPENING OF THE SECOND SEAL.** The second horse is **red**, the

color of blood, the symbol of war. It is probable that the second living creature (<sup>i</sup> 4 : 7), the ox, gives the call to the horseman to appear. It is in vision that John sees the red horse, and, at once, knows the significance of it. In the symbolism of this book we are not to understand that actual war is meant. It is a book in which words are not to be pressed in their literal meaning. War stands for calamity, suffering, woe, hardships of all kinds. War, in the olden times, meant unbridled passions, the release of all the ferocity dwelling in human nature, savagery. It describes the sorrow brought by a sinful world upon itself through its wilful rejection of its rightful Lord. That the truth may win its way, and opposition be broken down, the powers of the ungodly must be weakened. This is portrayed by the absence of peace, and the vision of the wicked slaughtering each other. The conquering Christ is at work in this vision also in the sending of judgments upon a wicked world. This vision has usually been referred to the persecutions that came upon Christians on account of their allegiance to Christ. But the reference is not to be found in these persecutions, nor to any contests between the righteous and the ungodly. Rather it is the picture of the ungodly slaughtering each other. **Kill one another**, rather, *slaughter*. Not receiving Jesus, the real peace-giver, into their souls, whereby peace with God and with men would have come, they became bitter toward each other. At enmity with Jesus, they became enemies of each other. Great judgments and sorrows came upon the world because of their rejection of their rightful sovereign. It was as if war with its limitless horror had

there was given unto him a great sword.

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

there was given to him a great sword.  
5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold a black horse, and he who sat on him had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, A quart of wheat for a denárý, and three quarts of barley for a denárý; and,

*g* 4:7.      *h* Amos 8:11; Zech. 6:2; Job 30:30; Jer. 8:21; Lam. 5:10.

*i* Ezek. 4:10, 16; Dan. 5:27.      *k* 9:4; Jer. 30:11.

come upon the world. In this book the expression, **earth**, is generally used of the ungodly upon the earth. There was given, in vision, **a great sword**, a symbol of fearful slaughters, of widespread devastation. As a result **peace** goes from the earth. In the Greek the article, *the*, occurs before peace, meaning the peace that ought to be on the earth, the peace that Christ would give it. The period of this vision is not limited to the one definite era, but extends through all the subsequent periods. The red horse may continue his travels on the earth during the progress of all the seals. The sufferings as of war, the woes of a burdened world, the judgments sent upon the earth rejecting Jesus, are fittingly represented by this rider on the red horse. At the present time Europe is an armed camp, two million men being under arms. The condition of the entire world resembles an armed truce. If Jesus should conquer the ruling ideas of the nations, then, in an actual sense, wars and slaughters would wholly cease. Jesus unites the hearts of men to God and to each other. Sin disunites men from God and from each other, and creates slaughter.

**5, 6. THE OPENING OF THE THIRD SEAL.** Another of the living creatures says "Come," whereupon appears a black horse. The black color stands for misery, for famine (Jer. 4:28). The black horse, the balances, the small measure of common food for the daily living, indicate a time of great scarcity. The oil and wine stand for peace and joy. There is no allusion to a literal famine, or food or oil. There was a time of misery for the wicked world, a time of rest and confidence for the saints on the earth.

**5. Had opened**, rather, *opened*.

The third living creature, as given in the vision (4:7), had a face like a man. Omit **and see**. The **Come** brings a third horse, **black** in color. Logically famine follows war, hence in orderly procedure this follows the second seal. Black stands for mourning, gloom, despair. The rider has a balance in his hand, indicating a time of scarcity, when war has made a destruction of men and crops. The earth has yielded but a partial increase, and the things that support life are given out, not with a full hand, but are carefully weighed. In the Old Testament times of scarcity, bread was weighed out to men (Lev. 26:26). Ezekiel portrays the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem in this manner (Ezek. 4:16, 17).

**6. A voice came in addition to the vision. And I heard . . . beasts**, rather, *and I heard, as it were, a voice in the midst of the four living creatures*. The *as it were* does not throw any doubt upon the reality of the voice, or the distinctness of the words uttered, but shows an uncertainty as to the speaker and also his location. It seemed to come from a certain place, uttered by one of the living creatures or by him that sat upon the throne. The **measure** is a chenix, a solid measure holding about a quart. Eight measures would ordinarily be obtained for a penny or denarius. This was the daily pay for an able-bodied man at his work. The **penny** corresponds to fifteen cents in our currency, the denarius being apparently a liberal payment for a laborer's daily work (Matt. 20:2). **Barley** was a cheaper food, considered more fit for cattle than for men. Three measures of the common food might be purchased with the day's wages, supporting thereby partially, at least, a family if not too large. There is

thou hurt not the oil and the wine.  
 7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, <sup>1</sup>I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. <sup>m</sup>And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And

The oil and the wine hurt thou not.  
 7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold a pale horse; and he who sat on him, his name was Death, and Hades followed with him. And au-

l 4 : 7.

m Zech. 6 : 3.

indicated here a time of great scarcity, not of absolute starvation. **Oil and wine.** These are generally understood as modifying the judgment sent upon them, implying that God's anger is tenderly limited. Not the day-laborer, but the wealthy alone find occasion for the oil and the wine. If it were intended to emphasize God's mercy, this would be shown in the grant of abundance of wheat and a scarcity in the wine, rather than a scarcity of the necessities of life and an abundance of the luxuries of life. The sufferer from famine would not find in these luxuries compensation for the absence of the food that life leans upon. The laborer could not purchase them, they would be for the wealthy alone. These two terms express the joy, the abundance, the blessedness of life. They show that when the common things are cut off, the very highest things of life God bestows abundantly. They are, therefore, the symbolic expressions of God's care and love for his own people. The slaughter and famine came upon the world of the ungodly. They express God's attitude toward the unbelieving and rejecting world. But, at the same time, God has a people in the world; for them he provides and cares. In the second seal the ungodly slay each other. In this seal, although the ungodly suffer, there is rich provision for the flock of the Lord (Ps. 23 : 5; 91 : 10). John is seeing visions and symbols, not actual things. We may not seek anywhere in history for a time of actual famine, and regard it as a fulfilment of this vision. Oftentimes, through human selfishness and sinfulness actual famines have come, bringing terrible ills upon men. The seals represent the attitude of God toward the world on account of its relation to the church and cause of Christ. God sends judgments upon the ungodly.

#### 7, 8. OPENING OF THE FOURTH

**SEAL.** Another living creature says "Come," and a pale horse, livid like a corpse, appears. Death is the horseman, and the underworld is an inseparable companion. The judgments of God are only partial in severity and extent indicated by a fourth; they grow in severity indicated by one-third in 8 : 7. These judgments fall on the ungodly alone.

8. The fourth living creature now speaking is the eagle (4 : 7). There is a natural sequence in the character of the horsemen coming forth in response to the **Come** of the living creatures. War, famine, death follow each other in close order, revealing a growing intensity in meaning. In this seal there comes forth a **pale horse**. The Greek word here rendered pale is translated green in 8 : 7. It is a term often used of the pallor of the human face when paled by terror, or when dying or dead. **His name . . . death,** rather, *and he that sat upon him, his name was Death.* In this case only the name of the rider is given. Death is personified as a devourer, in the form of a skeleton specter, riding upon the horse (20 : 13, 14). It is a fearful vision. Death is understood by some as having the deeper meaning given to it in the writings of John and Paul, separation and alienation from God, the spiritual death. It is better, however, to regard it as here used in its usual sense. As death goes beyond war and famine in its intensity of meaning, so John sees the increasing judgment of God falling upon a wicked world. **Hell**, rather, *Hades.* This word, hades, has a wide range of meaning. It is sometimes used in its literal and etymological sense, the unseen world, the world of spirits. Sometimes it is almost identical with the grave as symbolizing the unseen world. Sometimes it involves the idea of pain, of penalty that come upon the ungodly in the unseen life. It is regarded as the enemy of Christ

power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, <sup>a</sup>to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

thority was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

<sup>a</sup> Lev. 26 : 22-29; Jer. 15 : 2, 3; Ezek. 14 : 21.

and his cause (Matt. 16 : 18, Revised version). Here it is simply the grave or unseen world that swallows up the people. Death and hades go close together. It is to be noted that there are four instruments with which these two scourges work—sword, hunger, death, wild beasts. Ezekiel speaks of God's four sore judgments (Ezek. 14 : 21). These judgments come upon the world in its ungodliness, and therefore there are four agencies of destruction, because four is the symbol of the world. Those who follow the Lamb shall have blessings; those who follow the world and dwell under its sway shall have the world itself turning upon them and bringing curses. The rule of these two, death and hades, extends over the **fourth part of the earth**. Some have surmised that each one of these four judgments rules over a fourth part of the earth, thus making the entire world subject to the sway of death. It is better, however, to regard this term, *one-fourth*, not in any strict and mathematical sense, but as expressive of the wide rule of death. We are not to find in this a prophecy of the murderous persecutions that have come upon the church in many centuries of the Christian era. We are to find the meaning of this symbol in the judgments of God coming, not upon his church, but upon the ungodly world. So long as the claims of Jesus are rejected, so long the history of the world is to be marked by the perpetual return of wars, pestilences, and everything that is fraught with disaster, to those who live in the worldly sphere. And, therefore, the seals are opened and these judgments come forth under the supreme control of the Lamb, whose

the world is by right, and to whose rulership all men should submit themselves.

**9-11. THE OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL.** We have here no voice of the living creatures as in the first four seals. There is a vision of the great altar of the temple court, where sacrifices were offered. Under this John sees the souls of the martyred dead. They are conscious, enjoy a nearness to God, are interested in the extension of God's cause, and intercede for the manifestation of God's righteousness. They are given white robes, significant of enlarged joy and of the victory that will ensue for the cause for which they died. Assurance is given that others must yet die on the earth in witnessing for the truth, and that the holy dead did not die in vain. The artificial and methodical structure of the book is manifest in the grouping of the seven seals into two divisions. In the letters to the churches there was a division into two groups of three and four. In the seals there is a corresponding division into two groups of four and three. The same line of division separates the first four trumpets from the three following. It is thought by many that the reason for the group of four standing first is that God's judgments come upon the world, four being the number that represents the world. No longer does a horseman appear as in the first four; no longer does the voice say, Come. We pass from the material world with its war, pestilence, and famine, into the unseen world. There is a like passage into the unseen world, at the same point, in the corresponding series of the trumpets and the bowls, thus:

FIFTH SEAL, 5 : 9-11. FIFTH TRUMPET, 9 : 1. FIFTH BOWL, 16 : 10.  
An altar in heaven. | Pit of the abyss. | Throne of the beast.

It is a designed break in the form of the teaching, not accidental. It is evident from this sameness in the structure of the book, in seal, in trumpet, in bowl, that the seals cannot be intended to depict a chronological his-

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; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain on account of the word of God, and on account of 10 the testimony which they had. And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true,

o 8 : 3 ; 9 : 13.

p 20 : 4; John 16 : 2.

q 12 : 17; 19 : 10; 2 Tim. 1 : 8.

r 19 : 2; Deut. 32 : 36-43; Luke 18 : 7, 8.

tory of the world or the church. They rather outline certain great ideas that will be in operation in all the ages from the first. The fifth seal, trumpet, and bowl, correspond with each other, representing each of them the same thought under a differing aspect, a scene in the spiritual world. "The altar here in view is the counterpart of the altar of burnt offering and the victims which have been offered at it are martyred members of the church, who have followed their Head in the example of his sacrificial death. Comp. 5 : 6, 'as if slain.' . An altar is mentioned also in 8 : 3, 5; 9 : 13; 11 : 1; 14 : 18; 16 : 7" (SWETE). Comp. Heb. 8 : 5, note.

**9. Under the altar.** In 8 : 3 is given a sight of the altar of incense. Here it is the brazen altar, standing in the court, the altar of sacrifice (Exod. 27 : 1). It is a part of the heavenly temple, existing figuratively there. At the foot of the altar, on the earth, the blood of the victim was poured (Exod. 29 : 12). **The souls.** The same word is used in the New Testament interchangeably for the principle of life, and also for the immortal, conscious part of man's nature (Matt. 16 : 25, 26). Here it refers, not to the mere principle of life, but to the conscious, sentient part. The souls are represented as praying, appealing to God's righteousness, and receiving rewards. **Slain for the word of God.** This indicates the class of persons seen. John does not see the souls of all. As the purpose here is to show God's holy vindication of his people, it is needful to bring into view only those who had passed through martyrdom. It cannot, therefore, be held with Milligan that this number includes all the men who had lived lives of faith—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the men who through struggles had entered into blessedness. These persons were not slain for personal reasons, but on account of their

devotion to God, counting not their lives dear unto them. The expression, *word of God*, stands for God's revelation of himself and his will, testing their faithfulness in adhering to it and declaring it. It is maintained by some that the absence of any allusion to Jesus shows that these martyrs were exclusively Old Testament martyrs. In many passages in this book the testimony is explicitly declared to be that concerning Jesus (1 : 2, 9; 12 : 17; 19 : 16). As John was living at a time when persecutions were sweeping over the church, the vision includes those in the Christian era who suffered for Christ's sake. It would be a comfort to the sufferers of his day to know that they, in their death, would not be uncared for, and that they would not die in vain. This vision is designed to bring out and emphasize the teaching that God's seeming delay in executing penalty upon the enemies of his church will, in time, give way to punishment. The souls of the martyrs are made use of, as in a drama, to bring out this teaching. There is no real throne, real altar, no suffering on the part of the saints in the unseen life.

**10. The person addressed is Lord, rather, Master.** The term is sometimes applied to God, as supreme ruler (Luke 2 : 29; Acts 4 : 24); sometimes to Christ (Jude 4; 2 Peter 2 : 1). He is described as **holy and true.** God's holiness and fidelity to his own nature and promises furnish foundation for prayer, for appeal to God that he execute righteousness among men, that he punish wrongdoing. At the same time they serve to bewilder the righteous man, in the presence of wrong unpunished, unless there is also a remembrance of God's righteousness. There is here portrayed, in vision, the consciousness among the saints, of God's holy nature, and of unexplained delay in executing punishment upon the wicked on the earth.

avenge our blood on them that dwell  
11 on the earth? And white robes were  
given unto every one of them; and it  
was said unto them, 'that they should  
rest yet for a little season, "until their  
fellow-servants also and their brethren,  
that should be killed as they were,  
should be fulfilled.'

dost thou not judge and avenge our  
blood on those who dwell on the earth?  
11 And a white robe was given to each  
one of them; and it was said to them,  
that they should rest yet a little time,  
until their fellow-servants also and  
their brethren, who were about to be  
killed as they were, should be fully  
numbered.

*s 3 : 4, 5, 7 : 9, 14.*

*t 14 : 13; Isa. 26 : 20, 21; Dan. 12 : 13.*

*u Heb. 11 : 40.*

**Avenge.** It has been said that the spirit here manifest is not Christian in its nature, that it shows a spirit of revenge. There is a growth in the tenderness of spirit in the New Testament as contrasted with the Old Testament, due to the influence of Christ upon the age. (Comp. 2 Chron. 24 : 22; Ps. 138 : 9 with Acts 7 : 60.) But we may remember that every holy nature must side with God in feeling that wickedness ought to be punished. A holy nature rejoices in goodness and hates badness. To hate evil is as essential as to love the good. The saints in heaven are assured that God, in time, must punish wrong-doing, the open enemies of his church. In the same spirit Milton writes concerning the justice that should be measured out upon the murderers of the Waldenses. It was not personal vindictiveness, but the justice of a high moral nature. Such cries may go up in all the ages to the holy Lord, for the moral sense of God's people will not be satisfied until wickedness is punished as wickedness. Heaven will be more heavenly when goodness is rewarded and wickedness is recognized as such and punished. **That dwell on the earth.** This does not mean that those for whose punishment they cry are at that time living on the earth. The expression only denotes that they were earthly in their nature, that they were worldly people. Their home is on the earth; men whose portion is in this life. We must not infer that the martyred saints do actually invoke God's vengeance upon the persecutor. In a highly figurative and dramatic way they are made use of to show that though God apparently delays yet, in time, the suffering will be richly rewarded.

**11. And white robes were given,** rather, *And there was given them, to each one, a white robe.* It is implied that these cries will be an-

swered in time. The white robe is frequently mentioned in this book (3 : 4, 5, 18). It is the symbol of purity, joy, triumph. It refers, seemingly, to a special privilege granted to them on account of their special faithfulness in the earthly life. In so far as the martyrs are those of the Christian era, the white robe signifies God's approval and the assured victory of their cause. Despite all the contumely, reproach, and suffering on the part of ungodly men, God highly regards them, and their cause will be crowned with triumph. It is not to be understood that the saints in heaven are not always clothed in white (3 : 4). That is a part of the heritage of all Christ's people. The robes are given not actually, but in vision, in order that the divine teaching may be clearly brought to view. Those on the earth, the faithful servants of God, are described as their **fellow-servants**, having a common relation to God; their **brethren**, having a kinship with each other. **Be killed.** Jesus foretold days of persecution in store for his followers (John 16 : 2). Here in vision times of persecution and outward disaster are foretold for the church. In every century this vision has received its fulfilment. In recent years in Madagascar, in Africa, in China, in Armenia many have given up their lives for Christ's sake. Missionaries who have hazarded their lives in unhealthful climates have been equally martyrs. Such times may yet come when persecution and hatred will arise against Christ's cause. Under all the seals there will be faithful ones suffering in varied ways for Christ. Men who suffer in business for Christ's sake, who suffer social standing for principle, may be classed among those having the martyr spirit. This seal is designed to make plain the following teachings: (1) The con-

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; \*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

12 And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon 13 became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig-tree casts its unripe figs, when shaken by a

x 16 : 18; Hag. 2 : 21.

y Isa. 13 : 9, 10; Acts 2 : 20.

z 8 : 10; 9 : 1.

a Nahum 3 : 12.

quering Christ has an ally in the church, the people following in his steps and holding to his life. (2) Alongside of the forces of evil in the world are two effective agencies of Christ—the church faithful in suffering and the prayers of saints above. (3) While God seemingly permits the wicked element to triumph, yet in time God's judgment will be manifest. His holiness and righteousness insure this. (4) God in the unseen life will graciously and richly reward his faithful servants. Larger faithfulness will bring larger reward. It is to be understood that all this takes place in vision. There is no real altar in heaven under which, or at the foot of which, the souls of the martyrs repose. The saints above already share in the joys of Christ. These things are portrayed in vision in order that the teachings of Christ may be seen with the eye. It is an acted prophecy that God sympathizes with his suffering church, will stand by it, will put a crown upon it, will punish the wicked opposers of his kingdom.

**12-17. THE OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL.** In this seal we have, in vision, the beginning of the overwhelming of the ungodly world by God's judgments. Those opposing Christ flee in conscious weakness and despair from his face. When God rises in his might no one can stand. The imagery is taken from the Old Testament prophecies and the Saviour's discourse in Matt. 24. The falling of the stars, the darkening of the moon, and the kindred physical changes are not to be taken literally. They all have a real meaning, but are not to be interpreted in a material way. In every age God's judgments make war upon the ungodly portion. There may, therefore, be successive fulfilments of this vision at crises of the world's history, while the complete fulfilment will naturally take place in

the events preceding the Lord's final, personal coming.

**12-14. And lo . . . earthquake,** rather, *and there was a great earthquake.* This seal surpasses the preceding seals in the terribleness of the judgments. The sword, famine, and pestilence having done their work, these now give way to convulsions in nature whereby the whole fabric of things is shaken. Jesus implies the stability of the laws of nature, but affirms the indestructibility of his own words (*Mark 24 : 35*). There is a noticeable correspondence between this series of visions and the discourse in Matthew concerning the earlier and later comings of the Lord. The second seal corresponds with ver. 6; the third seal with ver. 7; the fourth seal with ver. 7; the fifth seal with ver. 9; the sixth seal with ver. 29. The earthquake is a sign of an impending crisis. In the corresponding vision of the trumpets, which runs parallel with the seals, an earthquake is mentioned in the sixth trumpet. **Black as sackcloth.** This expression is used in *Isa. 50 : 3*. **The moon,** rather, *the whole moon.* In the entire eclipse the moon assumes a reddish color, but giving out no light. The same expression occurs in *Joel 2 : 31*: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come." Peter declares (*Acts 2 : 16*) that these words had a fulfilment in the introduction of Christianity and the destruction of the Jewish State. Isaiah makes use of the same terms in describing the fall of Babylon (*Isa. 13 : 9, 10*). **Stars of heaven.** These words are found in *Matt. 24 : 29*. **Fig tree.** (*Comp. Isa. 34 : 4; Matt. 24 : 32*.) As showing how the discourse of Jesus in *Matt. 24* influences this book it may be noticed that there the parable of the Fig Tree immediately follows the mention of the falling of the stars. **And**

14 wind; <sup>b</sup> and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. <sup>d</sup> 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 freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; <sup>e</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, <sup>f</sup> and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>b</sup> for the great day

14 great wind; and the heaven parted asunder as a scroll rolled up; and every mountain and island were removed out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the rich men, and the strong men, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; because the great day of his

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 102: 26; Isa. 34: 4; Heb. 1: 12, 13.

c 16: 20; Isa. 2: 14-17; Jer. 3: 23; 4: 23-26.

<sup>d</sup> Job 34: 19, 20; Ps. 110: 5, 6; Isa. 24: 21, 22.

<sup>e</sup> Isa. 2: 19.

<sup>f</sup> 9: 6; Isa. 2: 19; Jer. 8: 3; Hosea 10: 8; Luke 23: 30.

<sup>g</sup> Ver. 10; 19: 15; Ps. 2: 9-12.

<sup>h</sup> 16: 14; Isa. 13: 6, etc.; Joel 2: 11; Zeph. 1: 14, etc.

**the heavens . . . together,** rather, *and the heavens departed as a scroll rolled up.* To the beholder looking upon the earth from above it, the heaven, with its firmament, appeared to be rolled up for removal. These widespread convulsions in nature, seen in vision, embracing moon, stars, heavens, island, mountain, are not to be understood in a material sense. The teachings portrayed by these symbols might all come to pass, even if nature were not in any way disturbed. No physical changes took place at Pentecost when Peter affirmed that the prophecies of Joel had come to their fulfilment. These symbols indicate great convulsions in civil society, the overturning of all that opposes Christ and his cause. It is the picture of all that is hostile to Christ giving way, all organized opposition breaking down.

**15, 16.** John has seen, in vision, nature giving way; he now sees the effect of this collapse of nature upon the intelligent creation. The wicked of all classes, the disobedient and unbelieving who had joined together against the Lord's cause now give way in alarm. **Kings . . . mighty men,** rather, *And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong.* These are not the believers, but the ungodly. It is to be noted that seven classes of men are here portrayed. As seven stands for completeness these seven classes of men represent the combined forces of men arrayed against God. From the highest to the lowest they are utterly

overwhelmed, they make confession of their guilt. (Comp. Ps. 2.) **In the dens.** (Comp. Isa. 2: 19, 21.) On the impossibility of escaping from God's presence see Ps. 139. Fear, inspired by the consciousness of guilt and ill-desert, drives away the unbelieving from God's presence. Adam hid from God's sight (Gen. 3: 8); the publican stood afar off (Luke 18: 13); the finally impenitent voluntarily go from God's presence (Matt. 25: 46). The **face** represents the person. The psalmist said: "Thy face will I seek" (Ps. 27: 8). God is attractive to the godly in heart. The Father and the Son both are manifest in these moral dealings with men, though it is probable that the final judging will be that of the Son (John 5: 22). **Wrath of the Lamb.** The words seem antagonistic in their meaning, affirming that wrath dwells in the Lamb. It is to misinterpret the nature of Jesus to think of him as gentle and tender only. When on earth he was angry (Mark 3: 5). He exercised a holy indignation. He condemned utterly the hypocrite, pronouncing woes (Matt. 23). He is the same Jesus still, uniting holiness and compassion. President Wayland pronounced these words the most fearful in the Bible, revealing the awfulness of sin, the utter guilt of wicked men that the nature of the divine Lamb, whose being is love, should be stirred up so that the divine wrath should be manifested. In nature and in the realm of grace there is a severity as well as a tenderness in God manifested. God's tenderness alone dwelt upon obscures

of his wrath is come; <sup>i</sup>and who shall  
be able to stand?

wrath is come, and who is able to  
stand?

*i Ps. 76 : 7; Mal. 3 : 2.*

the holy judgments of God; his severity alone dwelt upon hides his heart of love more tender than that of a mother (Rom. 11 : 22).

**17. For** presents the reason for the trepidation. **The great day.** It is a day of days; a day for which other days were made. It is sometimes spoken of as "that day," or "the day." Often men have seen intimations and premonitions of that great day, great convulsions in nature or in society when the hearts of men failed them for fear. The one great day is yet to come. **Able to stand.** Who can stand justified, without fear or alarm, before him at that day? (*Comp. Mal. 3 : 2.*) The reference is to men without God. Paul's words in Rom. 8 : 34 reveal the heart of the man who can face all things, even the Lord's coming and the judgment day, without alarm. Every man with an awakened moral nature will carry a judgment seat in his own heart. One of the world's great hymns, "Dies Iræ," is founded on the scenes of this great day, the coming of the Lord. John speaks of the calmness of heart with which the child of God meets the last day (*1 John 4 : 17*). Read also Whittier's "Abraham Davenport." Only the justified man can stand calmly before the judgment day. Ungodly men may have quietness in mind now because present things are exclusively dwelt upon; because God is ignored; because the judgment day is kept from the thoughts. This seal brings us close to the end. But the end cannot be yet, because God is a God who makes distinctions among men. There must therefore be a separation between the believer and the unbeliever. These moral distinctions among men are now revealed to us in the next vision.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. God reveals his purposes little by little. It requires ages to see God's complete plans. We must not judge hastily of God's government, because we do not know all yet. Jesus breaks one seal at a time (*ver. 1; 1 Cor. 13 : 12*).

2. Christianity began on the earth in a small way, has met with much opposition, but has the truth of God in it. Jesus will overcome all opposition (*Heb. 10 : 13*). No one need fear that the cause of Christ will perish from the earth, though it needs the help of every friend of Jesus to give it wider power (*ver. 2*).

3. Jesus is the great peacemaker. The absence of Jesus begets disorders and disturbances in the heart, and in the world. The ills in the world all arise from the rejection of Jesus as the supreme ruler and Saviour (*ver. 3*).

4. God has judgments as well as blessings. Judgments and afflictions, if used rightly, will prove great blessings. If they do not lead the heart to wisdom, they will only embitter and harden it. Moses was helped by rebuke; Pharaoh was hardened by it (*ver. 5*).

5. God has always a regard for his own. He prepares a table for them (*Ps. 23 : 5*).

6. Death has been looked upon as the king of terrors. He is terrible to the man who has not the promise of the life in Christ. Worse than the first death is the second death (*Rev. 2 : 11*). Jesus can change the first death into a sleep (*Acts 7 : 60*). We may overcome, through Christ who is the life, the power of the first and the second death. Death on the pale horse will not frighten the believer (*1 Cor. 15 : 55*), nor destroy the church (*ver. 8; Matt. 16 : 18*).

7. The souls of the faithful are honored in heaven. Cast out of the earth as unworthy, they constitute God's jewels in heaven (*ver. 9*).

8. It is not vindictiveness, but a fellowship with the holy God that leads the suffering Christian to pray for the outshining of his power in protecting his cause and putting down wickedness on the earth. The Christian must hate the wrong-doing while trying to bless the wrong-doer. The coming of God's kingdom means the utter subjugation of all evil. Jesus will be not only a forgiving Saviour, but also a reigning Saviour. The

good man must long for the time to come when wickedness shall be suppressed and holiness shall reign (ver. 10).

9. Men need great patience in times of persecution. If God can be patient, his people should strive so to be. The seeming inequalities in life and injustices will disturb the heart unless there is a firm belief in God's holiness, wisdom, and strength. God's patience toward wrong-doers is for their salvation (ver. 11; 2 Peter 3:9).

10. Only through tribulation may we enter into heaven (2 Tim. 3:12). Our own age has supplied many martyrs for Christ and his cause. Every age is a martyr age (ver. 11).

11. All nature is under God's control. More stable than the laws of nature are the words and teachings of Jesus. When the heavens and earth pass away, Jesus and his words will abide (ver. 12; Matt. 24:35).

12. Temporal things change and pass away, unseen things are abiding (2 Cor. 4:18). It is not wise to be a man of this life only (ver. 14; Ps. 17:14).

13. Among men there are gradations, kings and bondmen. All are equally insignificant when measured by God's infinite person and power. Men may talk like Pharaoh, but they will crumble into nothingness at the touch of his power (ver. 15).

14. If a person find a refuge in Christ, he will need no other refuge at the last day. Jesus is a hiding-place for penitent men. David found a hiding-place in God's forgiveness (Ps. 32). The day of wrath will never come to a man who makes Christ his friend. Every man creates for himself, by his attitude toward Christ, a day of blessing or a day of wrath (ver. 16).

15. God's love and God's anger are joined together in the one person. On the earth Jesus, in holy anger, cleansed the temple. His nature is not that soft kind that does not distinguish between the good and the bad, that treats all alike irrespective of character. Jesus himself uses the words, blessed and accursed (ver. 16; Matt. 25:34).

16. There is a great gulf between the friends and enemies of the Lord Jesus.

Great alarms and the judgment day have no terrors for the man who has made God his friend (1 John 4:17). In life character is forming. At the judgment the character will be tested (ver. 17).

## CHAPTER VII.

Six seals have been opened. In the fifth seal was the assurance that God will avenge his own cause, and those who die in maintaining it. In the sixth seal we see the trepidation and fear with which the ungodly world looks upon the manifestation of the Lord. Before the seventh seal is opened there are presented two visions, kindred in nature, by way of episode. They have no direct relation to the preceding or the following seal. The expression, *after this*, does not indicate that the things portrayed in the vision take place chronologically after the opening of the sixth seal. In order of time John saw this vision after he had seen the seals opened. There is a moral reason for the appearance of the visions in this place. What will be the condition of Christ's people when these dread events happen? Will they be overwhelmed in the judgments upon the wicked? Will the persecutions that rage against the church utterly destroy it? Will God draw a dividing line between his people and his adversaries? We have the answer in these visions. While those living on the earth in an earthly way will be subject to God's severest judgments, Christ's own will be recognized as his, and treated as such. Severe judgments have already been portrayed in the seals—slaughters, famines, death. The judgments revealed in the trumpets will be more severe than those in the seals. These visions are, therefore, intended to be consolatory in their nature for the followers of Christ. Jesus has a tender regard for his flock. He will not permit their hearts to fail them for fear lest they also may perish. They will have tribulations, but the judgments will not fall on them. They will be chastened, they will not be punished (John 15:2). This vision represents the constant relation that Jesus sustains toward his people, at all times during all the seals, the whole course of time in the world's history. In every age

*The sealed book—Sealing of faithful Israelites from impending judgments.*

**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.

*k Jer. 49:36; Dan. 7:2. l 9:4.*

judgments fall upon the wicked; in every age God knows how to shield his people. Ultimate defeat will not happen to Christ's cause or Christ's people. As Jesus foretold persecutions that his people might not be terrified, so here we have strong consolation for the troublous times that come (John 16:33).

The first vision—the sealing of the servants of God—embraces ver. 1-8; the second—the innumerable multitude—ver. 9-17.

**1-8. THE SEALING OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.** As revealing a general principle of God's administration we now have presented God's personal knowledge of his people and his provision for them. It corresponds in principle, with the saving of the households of the Israelites when the first-born of the Egyptians were put to death (Exod. 12:23).

In ver. 1-3 John beholds, in vision, four angels, a figurative way of speaking of God's power, restraining the winds from blowing on the earth. God's care for his people restrains the deserved punishment from coming upon the world of the ungodly until the people of Christ dwelling among them are made safe. They are all marked upon the forehead, whereby their identity is made known and their safety assured.

In ver. 4-8 John hears the number of the sealed, from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Israel here spoken of is the sum total of all believers. Each tribe gives its quota, an exact number, speaking definitely, for an indefinite number, but embracing every one of the redeemed.

**1. After these things,** rather, *after this.* In point of time this vision comes after the seals just noticed. While in chronological order it may have special reference to the critical times yet to come, it reveals the spirit

**7** AND after this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree.

of God's providences in all periods. It is in vision that John sees **four angels . . . earth.** Elsewhere he speaks of the angel having charge of the fire (14:8); having charge of the waters (16:5). The devout Hebrew conceived of the powers of nature as under the immediate control of God through his angels. It was not God apart from nature, but God in and through nature. The meaning intended here is, that the winds, symbolizing God's judgments, are restrained by the divine power. The judgments upon the wicked, widespread and intensive in their nature, are held back until the righteous dwelling among them are placed under the divine guardianship. The **four** indicates the world-wide, universal judgment impending, coming from every quarter. **Four corners.** These indicate the four cardinal points of the compass, the extremes of the earth. John now, beholding these visions in the heavenly life (4:1), looks down upon the earth. He is not teaching geography or declaring that the earth is a rectangle. He, in a figurative way, sees the entire world with its physical resources under the divine control. The winds, in a general way, denote the impending judgments, having in them destructive powers. They are spoken of in this way in the Old Testament prophecies. (See *Jer. 49:36; Dan. 7:2; Ezek. 1:4.*) Actual winds are not meant, nor physical disturbances in the air, but great convulsions and judgments represented by them. The object of the holding fast by the angels is that the wind may not as yet blow upon the earth. We are not to attribute any special meaning to **sea, or tree.** When an actual wind blows, the sea is disturbed, the trees are bent by the storm. They represent here the worldwide effects of God's visitations in righteousness upon the wicked. God holds back the winds so that his holy

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, <sup>m</sup> having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, <sup>n</sup> to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying; <sup>o</sup> Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, <sup>p</sup> till we have sealed the servants of our God <sup>q</sup> in their foreheads.

2 And I saw another angel coming up from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth <sup>s</sup> and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

*m John 6:27; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30. n 8:7-12. o 6:6; 9:4; Exod. 12:13; 2 Peter 2:9. p 14:1; Ezek. 9:4-6. q Gen. 1:26; Isa. 6:8. r 22:4.*

indignation is restrained for a time until another purpose be subserved. In like manner the flood did not come until Noah was saved; Sodom was not destroyed until Lot made his escape (Gen. 19:22).

**2. And I saw . . . east,** rather, *from the sun rising.* This angel is not the Lord Jesus as imagined by some, nor any definite angel, but a symbolic form introduced in order to bring out God's care for his own. The angels everywhere appear as carrying out God's purposes. It cannot be known whether any definite meaning is to be assigned to the angel arising from the *sun rising.* Some think that it indicates light, safety, and joy for the righteous; there is the sun rising for them while impending storms are for the wicked. The sun fittingly represents the Sun of Righteousness (Matt. 4:2). When judgments come they will **hurt** those upon whom they come. God's care for his people is such that even the wicked are not promptly punished in order that his own people may be preserved. God bears with the tares for the sake of the wheat (Matt. 13:29). **Seal.** The main features of this vision we find in Ezek. 9:4, where those who love God are marked upon the forehead. This mark is for their safety when destruction comes upon the city. Compare also Paul's reference to the seal in 2 Tim. 2:19. In Eph. 1:13 we have the sealing of the Holy Spirit, the inward witness and mark of God's ownership. The mark is upon the **forehead**, plain and open to all, where also the high priest had on a golden plate, "Holiness to the Lord." The distinguishing feature of the godly man is the godlikeness of the life. The Holy Spirit will make separateness of life, will transform character so that the Christian life will be read

and known by all (<sup>2</sup> Cor. 3:3). God will treat men, in outward ways, in accord with their character. It is as if a real mark were placed on the forehead. We have a marking of a precisely opposite character, that of the beast, in 13:17; 14:11.

**3. We have here the words heard by John. Hurt not . . . trees.** The powers of nature stand for the moral movements of God whereby he visits the wicked in judgments. The loud winds would be a fitting symbol of God's storm of justice sweeping over the earth. Paul's ship was helpless before the storm (*Acts 27*); in like manner no one can stand when God arises in vindication of his righteousness (*Job 9:3*). The angel is a servant of God, **our God.** Angels and men are equally under obligation to serve God. **Sealed.** This denotes a mark whereby the holy ones are distinguished from others, and their safety thereby secured. It is not an indiscriminate marking, but according to character. In the life that now is there is often no distinction, apparently, between the righteous and the unrighteous, whereby the moral sense is confused (*Ps. 73*). But, in due time, God will draw a dividing line between his friends and his enemies. **In their foreheads,** rather, *upon.* It is implied that when the servants of God are sealed, that the winds will hurt the earth; that is, the wicked who make their home there. The unsealed men will be hurt. In reality all men are sealed with God's seal, or the seal of the beast. Every man has a character, and stands in a certain definite relation to God. This sealing must not be interpreted to mean the physical safety of God's followers at all times. Jesus said: "Not a hair of your head shall be hurt," yet these same men were persecuted, tortured, killed. He

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 tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

4 And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel;  
 5 Of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand sealed,  
     Of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand,  
     Of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand,

s 9 : 16.

t 2 Cor. 1 : 22.

u 14 : 1.

had reference, not to the physical life, but to the inner life, the man himself.

**4. And I heard the number.** He does not state from whom he heard the number. One asked Jesus if few would be saved (*Luke 13 : 23*). A definite answer would have ministered only to curiosity. He, therefore, gave counsel that the questioner be found among the saved. Persons are sealed from each of the twelve tribes, representing all the people of Christ, the collective, universal church. We have twelve, the number that stands for the church, squared and multiplied a thousandfold, one hundred and forty-four thousand from all. By this is meant, not that this arithmetical number will be saved, but that the entire, the complete, number of Christ's people will be saved. It would utterly mislead us to regard this number as used in a mathematical sense. It is a symbolic expression expressing the conception of the largeness of Christ's kingdom and the unerring accuracy with which Christ separates his own from the mass of men in a wicked world. **Israel.** The question arises whether these sealed persons are of the literal Hebrew race, showing the number of the lineal descendants of Abraham who are saved through Christ. This view is maintained by many who think the first vision gives the Jewish followers of Christ; the second vision the Gentile followers of Christ. This view cannot be maintained. The New Testament writings wipe out the distinction between the Jew and the Gentile in the church. All believers in Christ are the children of Abraham (*Gal. 3 : 29*), are true Israelites (*Phil. 3 : 3*). All believers are included in the expression, twelve tribes (*21 : 12*). This vision represents the entire church of Christ on the earth, as the next vision repre-

sents them gathered into heaven. All believers, therefore, Gentiles as well as Jews, must be embraced in the sealed. The mark upon the forehead characterizes all the saved, not Jews alone (*14 : 1 ; 22 : 4*). Satan marks all his own, of all races, with his own distinguishing mark (*12 : 16, 17 ; 14 : 9 ; 16 : 2 ; 19 : 20*). The marking of God will therefore fittingly belong to all his people, of all races. There is no limitation in the description, all the servants of God are to be marked. The conclusion is irresistible that **sealed** here embraces all the believing part of the world, whether Gentile or Jew by birth or belief. As to the time of sealing. As the reference is to the entire church of Christ, in all the ages, the sealing cannot be limited to a certain time. It is not restricted to a period just before the end, but goes on always, at all periods of the church's history. At all periods God knows his own, cares for them, supplies with needful grace, creates his own holy character in them, gathers to himself. Not one of them is lost (*John 10 : 28*). The sealed belong to all ages and peoples, the one organized host of the Lord Jesus. At distinct times of peril Christ will recognize and save his own. When Jerusalem fell, his followers, remembering his words of counsel, escaped the horrors of the siege. At the last days, when the present order of things will give way (*2 Peter 3 : 10*), Christ will recognize this invisible seal.

**5-8.** We have here the list of the twelve tribes. The names do not correspond with the names as usually given in other places (*Ezek. 48 : 1-27, 31-34*). It is difficult to decide why the changes have taken place. Judah stands first in the list, instead of Reuben the firstborn. The reason for this change may be the desire to place

- 6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand.  
 Of the tribe of Neptahlim 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.

*The sealed book—Vision of the glorified sufferers: the seventh seal.*

- 9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great

- 6 Of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand,  
 Of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand,  
 Of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand,  
 7 Of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand,  
 Of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand,  
 Of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand,  
 8 Of the tribe of Zebulon, twelve thousand,  
 Of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand,  
 Of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed.

- 9 After these things I saw, and behold

v Ps. 22 : 27; Isa. 60 : 3, 8; Rom. 11 : 25.

honor upon Jesus, inasmuch as he is of the tribe of Judah (5 : 5). Dan is omitted entirely from the lists. Several conjectures are given for the omission: That it was given over to idolatry (*Judg. 18 : 1-31*); that it had disappeared, being entirely extinct in the days of John; that the symbol of the tribe, a serpent (*Gen. 49 : 1*), made it unfitting to be classed among the followers of the Lamb. Ephraim is omitted, Joseph taking the place. In all the Old Testament period Ephraim assumes a position hostile to Judah, which was true, in the main, to Jehovah and his cause (*Ps. 80 : 2*; *Jer. 7 : 17*). Levi has here a place in the list. As Levi had the priesthood, he had no share among the tribes. Inasmuch as all believers are now priests (*1 Peter 2 : 9*), Levi fittingly takes a position among the twelve tribes. The order in which the names occur is different from that found elsewhere. Doubtless John had his reasons, which we cannot discover, for this differing order. Perhaps the difference in the order is another indication that the vision is not meant to represent the fleshly Israel, but the spiritual Israel. **Were sealed** should be omitted in all cases except in the first and last clauses. *Of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand sealed . . . of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand.*

**9-17. THE SECOND VISION. THE INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE.** Another companion vision follows, whose scene

is laid in heaven. It presents a higher conception than the preceding; there they were sealed, here they are saved. In the first vision dangers were impending; here glory has settled down upon them.

The vision is portrayed in ver. 9-12. John beholds a countless multitude in white, the symbol of purity, with palms, the symbol of rejoicing, praising God. They are gathered from all peoples. They ascribe their completed salvation to God, who originated their salvation, and to Jesus, who mediated it to them. The angels join the song, falling down before the throne and giving him a sevenfold doxology.

The vision is explained in ver. 13-17. An elder asks John who those are arrayed in white, and whence they came. He further explains to John that they came from great tribulations, and that they obtained their holiness of life through Jesus, whose blood made expiation for their sins. Because they are saved they worship God continually, have fellowship with God, have all wants supplied, are led into all fulness of life through Jesus, who is their shepherd.

**9. After this . . . lo,** rather, *After these things I saw, and behold.* In point of time this vision is placed beyond the end of human history, when the saved are gathered together. But the design is to present here a definite teaching, not to fix the mind upon the

multitude, which no man could number, <sup>a</sup> of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, <sup>b</sup> clothed with white robes, and <sup>c</sup> palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying;

<sup>b</sup> Salvation to our God, <sup>d</sup> which sitteth upon the throne,

<sup>c</sup> And unto the Lamb.

11 <sup>d</sup> And all the angels stood round about the throne, and <sup>e</sup> about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the

a great multitude, which no one could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and 10 palms in their hands. And they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and 11 to the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round the throne and the elders and the four living creatures,

x 5 : 9; Isa. 66 : 18; Matt. 8 : 11.

y Ver. 14; 3 : 5, 18; 4 : 4; 6 : 11.

z Lev. 23 : 40; John 12 : 13.

a 19 : 1; Ps. 3 : 8; 115 : 1; Isa. 43 : 11; Jer. 3 : 23; Hosea 13 : 4.

b 5 : 13.

c 5 : 9; John 1 : 29.

d 4 : 6.

chronology. In the first vision it was taught that the judgments of God will not come upon the world in any such way as to interfere with God's purpose of salvation. All the believers must be sealed. This vision presents to us a view of the sealed as gathered into one fold, having passed through the tribulation, an innumerable number. It is a great multitude. It is from every nation. To show the universal character of the gathering three further terms are added, making four, expressing the world-wide collection of the ransomed, **kindreds, people, and tongues**, rather, *tribes, peoples, and tongues*. Jesus speaks in like manner of the wideness of his kingdom (Matt. 8 : 11). They are before the throne and the Lamb. (Comp. 4 : 5, 6, 10; 5 : 8.) As in a drama, while there are new scenes introduced, yet the main features, the throne and the surrounding groups, remain the same. One common thread binds the book together. The **white robes** typify the priestly purity of the saved. Beyond all sublimity and grandeur of surroundings heaven is a place of whiteness of character. The **palms** do not portray the victory, as in heathen games, but reproduce the joyful scenes of the feast of Tabernacles. This was the feast of the ingathering of the crops, a national thanksgiving time (Lev. 23 : 40). Here all God's people are gathered home, under their own vine and fig tree, a reign of perfect security. The tribulation has passed, joy has come to abide with them. The number passes computation. It corresponds with the one hundred and forty-four thousand of ver. 4. It is a comfort to know that so many will be saved, that

the house may be filled (Luke 14 : 23); that he shall see of the anguish of his soul and be satisfied (Isa. 53 : 11). The cause of Christ is not doomed to defeat on earth or in its results in heaven. Albert Barnes thought that in the final outcome of God's reign the lost might be but an inconsiderable number compared with the multitudes of the saved.

**10. Cried**, rather, *cry*. It is a present, joyful, worshipful life. The **loud voice**, rather, *great*, indicates the heartiness of the praise, the appreciation of the salvation that has come to them. **Salvation**—the article is joined to the word in the Greek—is used in its widest sense. The salvation from sin, from the perils of life, the state of blessedness, are all attributed to God. It is alone of God's mercy from first to last, that the heavenly life is secured. Jesus is joined with God in the praise of procuring their salvation. No Jew would think of joining a created being, however high, with the uncreated God as an object of worship. Jesus must be a divine being.

**11.** As in chapter five a response is straightway given. The angels mentioned in 5 : 1 break forth into praise at the sight of the multitude saved through Christ. *And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and the elders and the four living creatures.* We are looking here at the worshipers from the outside of the circle. Hence the elders are mentioned before the living creatures. Unlike the scene in 5 : 11 the angels fall down before the throne. There is increasing development of God's wisdom and an increasing manifestation of reverence. God's purity and right-

- throne on their faces, and worshipped  
 12 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.  
 13 <sup>t</sup>And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in <sup>s</sup>white robes, and  
 14 whence came they ? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, <sup>t</sup>These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have <sup>i</sup>washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen ; the blessing, and the glory, and the wisdom, and the thanksgiving, and the honor, and the power, and the strength, be to our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they ? And I said to him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they who come out of the great affliction, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

<sup>e</sup> 5 : 12-14; 1 Chron. 16 : 36.      <sup>f</sup> 4 : 4; Zech. 4 : 4, 5.      <sup>g</sup> Ver. 9.

<sup>h</sup> 6 : 9; 17 : 6; John 16 : 33; Acts 14 : 22; Rom. 8 : 35-37.

<sup>i</sup> 1 : 5; Isa. 1 : 18; Heb. 9 : 14; 1 Peter 1 : 19; 1 John 1 : 7; Zech. 3 : 3-5.

eousness, his faithfulness and truth, his mercy and loving-kindness, his indignation against wrong-doing, these awaken the feelings of worship in the mind of the angelic host.

**12.** There is a sevenfold ascription of praise, differing in the words and in the order from that of 5 : 12. They do not praise him for the forgiveness of sin, for they do not know the meaning of forgiveness (5 : 9). If the angels rejoice over one sinner saved (Luke 15 : 7), how much more over a completed redemption when all the fruits of Christ's death shall be seen at once.

**13.** This vision is of such importance that an explanation is given of it. In like manner Jesus explained his parables, that in the one explanation the spirit of the interpretation of all parables might be seen (Matt. 13 : 18-23). Surprise and wonder may have been apparent in the face of John at the number of the saved. **One of the elders answered.** The question was asked in John's thoughts. The elder puts to him the question that he himself was thinking of. An elder, as representing the church, asks the question. Two questions are asked, who they are and whence they are ?

**14. I said,** rather, *I say or have said.* **Sir,** rather, *My lord.* John does not declare that he cannot tell, but he asserts the superior knowledge of the heavenly questioner. The elder himself, as representing the saved church, had personal knowledge of the matter, of the source and method of

salvation. He was in reality one of the redeemed. The answer is given in two parts. (1) **These . . . tribulation,** rather, *These are they which come out of the great tribulation.* The present tense is used, those who are coming. This carries with it the teaching of a continuous coming from the earthly to the heavenly life. The earthly life is defined as a *tribulation*, a time of trial. There is no allusion to any definite time of trial, the times preceding the end, but to all the human life as subject to trials (2 Tim. 3 : 12). Every age gives a contribution to the number of the redeemed. Saintship comes only through sufferings. Jesus foretold sufferings for his disciples (John 16 : 33). (2) **They have washed,** rather, *washed.* This washing took place in the blood. The sacrifice of Jesus, the expiation for sin, is the means of cleansing. John speaks elsewhere of a cleansing through the blood (1 John 1 : 7), of Jesus taking away sin (John 1 : 29). The **robes** refer not to the outward habits alone, but to the whole life, inner and outer, cleansed, renewed, sanctified. There is presented here the human acceptance of Christ's work. *They washed.* Men are saved as men, not as machines. The result of the washing is a whiteness. There is a seeming paradox, the blood makes white. The man who knows Christ, whose sins are forgiven by one who died for him, he can no longer live a sinful life. "Who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2 : 20)—the man feeling this cannot

15 <sup>k</sup> 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 <sup>m</sup> "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat" [Isa.

17 49 : 10]. 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" [Isa. 25 : 8].

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tabernacle over

16 them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; nor shall the sun

17 fall on them, nor any heat; because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them, and will guide them to the fountains of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. 5 : 8.      <sup>l</sup> 21 : 3; 22 : 3; Exod. 29 : 45; Ps. 68 : 16-18; Isa. 4 : 5, 6.      <sup>m</sup> Isa. 49 : 10.

<sup>n</sup> Ps. 121 : 5.      <sup>o</sup> Ps. 23 : 1; 36 : 8; Isa. 25 : 6; Matt. 2 : 6; John 10 : 11, 14.

<sup>p</sup> 21 : 6; Isa. 35 : 6, 7; John 7 : 37, 38.      <sup>q</sup> 21 : 4; Isa. 25 : 8.

live an ungodly life. The Christ in him will make a Christly life. The garments now are partially spotted, in time they will be exceeding white. Heaven is the completion of what is now really a holy life on the earth.

15. Having described the saved as to the personal character and the method of salvation, he now describes the relation to God in three aspects.

(1) **Therefore.** By reason of what they are they stand secure before God's throne. Only the cleansed can stand thus before the absolutely holy God. (2) **They serve,** rather, *worship*. We are told there is no night there (22 : 5); they need no temple there (21 : 22). John means that they continually worship God. As in the temple worship they adore and praise him. The life above is holy, happy, useful. It is full of enlarged activity. Heaven is not a place for dwarfing men, but for enlarging them in all possible holy directions. (3) **Shall dwell,** rather, *shall spread his tabernacle over them*. They will dwell, as in one tabernacle, with the Lord himself. They will not be apart from God, or strangers to his presence and his glory. He will overshadow them, will throw his own fellowship about them. Heaven is a place, not of majestic scenery or precious stones, but of delight in a personal God. To these sealed men it would be no heaven if God and the Lamb were not there. A holy heart is needful to make a heaven anywhere. Heaven is a place, but there must be a holy condition of heart as a prerequisite.

16. Out of their relation to God comes a blessed life, described under

two aspects. Every want shall be satisfied, and perfect security is assured. All physical, intellectual, spiritual want shall be satisfied. The limitations of this life will be removed. The burning sun of the Eastern sky, the wilderness wanderings, are things of the past. The deficiencies of life have given way to all the fulness of that life which is life indeed (1 Tim. 6 : 19; Revised version).

17. This verse is explanatory of the preceding. **The Lamb . . . shall feed**, rather, *shall be their shepherd*. There will be a personal relation to the Lord Jesus. The divine person on the throne will be their shepherd, who will guide them into all blessedness of the social, intellectual, spiritual life. There will be no division of the life into secular and sacred, all will be sacred. **Living fountains of waters**, rather, *fountains of water of life* (Isa. 49 : 10). **All tears**, rather, *every tear* (Isa. 25 : 8). It is not asserted that there will be tears in that blessed life to be wiped away. There will be fountains of water, but the fountains of tears will be dried up. The tear stands for sorrow, disappointment, grief, penitence, sin. These will exist there in the memory alone.

NOTE. THE CONSOLATORY VISIONS IN THE SERIES OF THE SEALS. This entire book is constructed in an orderly and methodical way, though to the casual reader it may seem a miscellaneous collection of visions, with not much relation to each other. Between the sixth and seventh visions occurs this episode, filling the chapter. The same method obtains in the series of

the trumpets. Between the sixth and seventh trumpets occurs an episode filling up the chapters 10, 11 : 1-14. One occurs also in connection with the series of the bowls (*chap. 14*).

In the unfolding of the seals there is a constant punishment of ungodliness; blow after blow comes upon it. There is a possibility that God may be regarded simply as a God of penalty. This chapter is not essential to understanding the meaning and development of the seals. If there were no break, if the sixth seal were followed at once by the seventh seal, we should see the steady march of God's procedure toward a definite end and a final triumph. But God has other thoughts—thoughts of mercy for his people. He is a God of judgment breaking down all opposition, having control of all forces seen and unseen; he is a God of tenderness, of guidance, of preservation for all his people. He so guides his people that as in Egypt there was darkness in the land of the ungodly, but light in the homes of his people (*Exod. 10 : 23*). He breaks down and he builds up. In this vision there is the utterance to all ages that God saves his people, he knows them one by one, he saves in large numbers. This episode occurs naturally toward the close of the series when the judgments grow heavier, inasmuch as the truth here taught will then be most needed. It reveals principles at work all the time, during the entire time when Christ is at work in the world. Over the flood rides the ark in safety. In the midst of impending destructions God is a shepherd having a sheepfold for his people in the life that now is. His work will not be a failure, inasmuch as uncounted numbers will be gathered into a place of safety.

These two visions complement each other. In the first, tribulations are the lot of the church, but God knows his own and keeps them. Storms may come, but the Saviour will be in the midst of the storm to preserve his own. The cloud, dark to the wicked, will be light to God's people (*Exod. 14 : 20*). God restrains a universal judgment upon the wicked until his people are safeguarded. In the second vision the redeemed of the Lord are seen by themselves, gathered out of every age to the

Lord himself. The complete symbolic number of the first is seen to be a countless number. There is a personal association with the divine Shepherd and an entrance upon a fulness of life through Christ. The doctrinal teachings are these: (1) A just judgment will come upon the ungodly. (2) This judgment is restrained on account of the godly dwelling among them. (3) God knows his own and cares for them. (4) The saved, in countless numbers, will be gathered into a place where the Redeemer and the redeemed will dwell in holy fellowship.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. God knows how to restrain wickedness. He can guide and guard his cause so that it shall not be overwhelmed. Even the wicked are blessed for the sake of Christ's people who dwell on the earth (ver. 1).

2. Revelation unfolds to us a knowledge of beings between man and God who serve God and are helpful to his people. The angels rejoice with God, and do his will gladly. Unseen by us they may be our helper (ver. 2).

3. Every Christian should live so openly and transparently that all will know his relationship to Christ. The character and the open confession should put a mark as upon the forehead (ver. 3).

4. The people of God are the true Israel. Believing in Jesus brings into a saved state and a holy society (ver. 4).

5. In every tribe and people Christ has his own. A complete register exists in God's mind of the saved. Those who are saved will be saved completely. Not one will be forgotten; there will be a completed number (ver. 5).

6. Heaven will not be a contracted place. Countless millions will be there of those dying in infancy, a large proportion of the human race. Believers will be numbered by millions, found in increasing numbers in the years to come. More piety may exist in the world than we sometimes estimate (ver. 9; 1 Kings 19 : 14, 18).

7. The saved will be from all peoples, making one people of the Lord. One word will be common in all languages, that of Jesus Christ. One common feel-

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

r 6:1. s Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13.

**8** AND when he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about half an hour.

ing will bind all hearts, a love for God and the Saviour (ver. 9).

8. Salvation is all from God, sin is all from man. Publicly and forever the saved will adore God and the Saviour. There will be no room in heaven for boasting, but large room for praise of Christ (ver. 10).

9. Heaven is largely a place of worship. Angels and redeemed alike worship God. It is fitting to cultivate the spirit of worship when on the earth. We should adore God for what he is, and praise him for what he does (ver. 11).

10. Angels praise God for his excellencies of nature. The redeemed sing another song, that of redeeming love. The sense of sin pardoned, of hearts renewed, of guidance in life, of a perfect salvation, will give to the saved sinner a new joy. God the Father and the Lamb will be jointly praised (ver. 12).

11. Even an apostle may be taught concerning heavenly things. Many things are yet to be learned by the Christian. Now all things are but imperfectly known (1 Cor. 13:12). Heaven will be a place for instruction in heavenly knowledge (ver. 13).

12. Tribulation means a threshing instrument. The human life undergoes many hardships. They are not pleasant in themselves. But they minister good in the discipline of the life, give room for patience, and bring Christ and his grace near (ver. 14; 2 Cor. 12:9).

13. All men need to have a white robe for the heavenly life. The best human garment apart from Christ is but filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). The man not having on a wedding garment is cast out (ver. 14; Matt. 22:13).

14. There will be a personal guidance of the Christian into all the domains of the holy life, a growth in all directions, in knowledge as well as in goodness (ver. 15).

15. A large part of the language of today will be useless in heaven. Tempta-

tions, perils, besetting sins, pitfalls, will all be things of the past. Heaven ought to be very attractive to burdened men on the earth (ver. 16).

16. It was a beautiful ministry when Jesus, in person, guided disciples, feeding, counseling, caring for them on every side of their lives. It will be more blessed when the glorified Lord shall personally associate with his glorified disciples (ver. 17).

## CHAPTER VIII.

**1. THE SEVENTH SEAL.** It is unfortunate and misleading that this verse should be joined to this chapter. It ought naturally to be joined to the seventh chapter, as the consummation of the series of the seals. The seven shows here, as everywhere else, a completeness in the line of thought introduced by the first seal. In the sixth seal the powers of wickedness break down under God's judgments; the people of God are safe-guarded; the innumerable host of the saved are gathered together; before the end is reached there are judgments upon the wicked. The series naturally ends with the seventh. In this chapter we have the opening of the seventh seal (ver. 1); the sounding of the first four trumpets (ver. 2-13).

**1. THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL. There was silence in heaven.** We cannot regard the songs in heaven as silenced, for God is always worthy of praise. The songs continue day and night. There may be songs of increased joy when Christ wins deserved triumphs. Nor can we think that it has reference to the silencing of the sighs of the church on the earth. This vision is seen in heaven. It can refer only to the cessation of the thunders and lightnings of 4:5. There is a pause in God's judgments because opposition has utterly broken down. In the second series they are resumed in even more startling forms. At the like period in the series of the trum-

pets (11 : 15) great voices are heard in heaven crying: "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." When the seventh bowl is poured out a great voice comes from the throne: "It is done" (16 : 17). The hour of triumph has come for Christ and his church. This triumph may be shown in vision in one of two ways, either by increased songs of praise or by the cessation of God's judgments. The latter method is adopted. **Half an hour.** We are not to regard this as literal. Nor is it to be construed as a very small period of time. This takes place in symbol. The essential idea is that an interval of silence takes place before the judgments of God again come in the next series of visions. This silence makes the resumption more impressive. Some interpreters think that the broken period of time, the half-hour, indicates that the series is not yet completed, that we must be prepared for what is to follow in another series of judgments. "Half an hour, though a relatively short time, is a long interval in a drama, and makes an impressive break between the seals and the trumpets" (SWETE).

**SECTION V. THE SERIES OF TRUMPETS.** 8 : 2 to 11 : 19. We begin the second series of visions, the trumpets. These are seven in number. This series moves alongside of the seals in order of time. They traverse the course of Christian history from the beginning to the closing, under another aspect. The opening seals reveal the antagonism to Christ's redemptive reign, with the judgments thereby coming on his foes. When the work is ended we behold the ransomed of the Lord gathered into one flock, sealed, saved, praising the Redeemer for his redemption. In this series we have God's judgments upon the openly hostile and antagonistic world. We may not affirm that the first seal corresponds in time with the first trumpet. The idea of chronology, of succession in order of time, or the limiting of a seal or a trumpet to a definite period within which its power may be felt, cannot be held. There is a noticeable parallelism between the two series from the beginning to the closing, showing that

they are constructed on the same plan. As in the seals there is a division into groups of four and three. As in the seals the earth was hurt, as famine, slaughter, death ranged over it, so here the land, the sea, the rivers, the sun that shines upon the earth, are all the objects of judgments. Under the fifth seal there was a vision of an altar in heaven. Under the fifth trumpet there is the opening of the abyss, the opposite of heaven. Between the sixth and seventh seals there were two intervening visions, the assurances of safety and triumph. Between the sixth and seventh trumpets are likewise two visions. Under the seventh seal there was, after the manifold struggles, a blessed and quiet rest, all opposition overcome, the ushering in for the church of an eternal blessedness. Under the seventh trumpet comes a voice of triumph: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." It is evident from the similarity of the two series that they are constructed on the same plan, must have the same general teachings under differing aspects. We have in this series God's judgments upon a wicked world, the trumpets indicating the warlike attitude of the Most High. It is only the revelation of the varied providence toward the church and the world which is successive in the seals and trumpets, not the progress of events. The work of redemption is introduced into human history; it is opposed, it triumphs. The world, resisting in all ways, finally gives way. We cannot here, more than in the seals, look for distinct and definite historical events. They present simply outlines of principles, not details. Undoubtedly many historical events may be found that again and again will, to a greater or lesser degree, correspond to the descriptions given. Under the varying imagery are portrayed the distinct kinds of judgments in which, and through which, God will finally overwhelm all opposition. We shall get the most of profit from the book by getting hold of the general teachings without attempting to localize the things described.

Nations have no personal existence beyond; judgments therefore must come upon them here. The trumpets

*The seven trumpets—Sounding of the first four trumpets.*

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

**3** And another angel came *x* and stood at the altar, *y* having a golden censer;

*t* 15 : 1; Luke 1 : 19

*u* Josh. 6 : 4.

*z* Rom. 8 : 34; Heb. 7 : 25.

*y* Lev. 16 : 12, 13.

stand, not for the proclamation of the gospel as is maintained by some, but for the manifestation of judgments. It is asserted that if the trumpets stand for judgments alone, the book represents a protracted day of judgment, and is not in accord with the nature of this dispensation, which is one of mercy and salvation. That the concluding three trumpets stand for disasters is evident from the terms used; they are *woe* trumpets ushering in days of darkness. All of the trumpets emphasize the dealings of God mainly with the impenitent. But there is mercy mingled with the judgment. The design of the judgments is not for penalty merely, but for convincing of sinfulness and bringing to repentance. In 9 : 20 it is said, "they did not repent," implying a gracious purpose of God even in punishments. At the close of the series there is the glad announcement that the kingdom God has been established (11 : 15). There has evidently been at work in the world a continuous and wide-spread and effective work of evangelization whereby not only the bad has been crushed, but all good agencies have been blessed in their work. In the episodes especially is manifest the other side of God's dealings, his attitude toward his own people.

**2-13. THE SOUNDING OF THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.** We have in the remaining part of this chapter the preparation for sounding the trumpets (ver. 2-6), and a description of the first four trumpets, with the fearful results following (ver. 7-13).

**2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God,** rather, *stand*. There are gradations among the angels, some higher than others in intelligence, power, rank. We are not required to think that the angels here seen in vision are really employed to carry out God's purposes; they may serve merely as symbols of God's way of

**2** And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and there were given *z* to them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood over the altar,

doing things. All power is given to the Son of man (*John* 5 : 27). We are not required to think that numerically seven angels sound the trumpets. The seven spirits of God (4 : 5) stand for the one Holy Spirit complete in his person and operations; the seven horns represent his unlimited power (5 : 6); the seven eyes represent his penetrating knowledge (5 : 6). In like manner the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven bowls represent the many judgments and dealings of God, which in reality are one. The vision of the seven angels means, in reality, that Jesus Christ will, in the interests of his kingdom, supervise all these judgments about to be portrayed. They are varied in form, they are essentially one. **Given seven trumpets.** The trumpet in the Old Testament is used to sound the alarm for war (*Num.* 10 : 19). It is used to summon the people to their solemn assemblies (*Num.* 10 : 10). It also indicated the time of marching when on their journeys (*Num.* 10 : 5, 6). It pointed out the danger approaching (*Ezek.* 33 : 3). The general meaning is that the sounding of the trumpet indicates the approach of God's judgments; it is the declaration that God makes a holy war upon the wicked world. It is not so much the cause of Christ triumphant that is brought into view as the destruction of the ungodly world that is emphasized. We are here in a condition of expectancy, the seven angels have the trumpets in their hands.

**3. Another angel . . . at the altar,** rather, *upon the altar*, as if standing over it. In 7 : 1 was a vision of four angels, and then a vision of another angel more distinctly representing God, having the seal of God. Here *another angel*, stands apart from the seven, doing a different work. Some have thought this angel to be the Lord Jesus, acting as mediator for his people, through whom prayers find ac-

and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with <sup>a</sup> the prayers of all saints upon <sup>a</sup> the golden altar which was before the 4 throne. And <sup>b</sup> the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out 5 of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, <sup>c</sup> and filled it with fire

having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should give it to the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar which was 4 before the throne. And there went up the smoke of the incense for the prayers of the saints, out of the hand of the angel before God.

5 And the angel has taken the censer;

<sup>a</sup> 5 : 8; 1 John 2 : 1, 2.

<sup>a</sup> 6 : 9; Exod. 30 : 1.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 141 : 2; Luke 1 : 10.

<sup>c</sup> Isa. 66 : 14-16; Ezek. 10 : 2.

ceptance with God. It is better, however, not to associate particular persons with these angelic figures, remembering that they are employed as symbols of thoughts and forces. The thought here presented is that the prayers of God's saints, through the divine mediation, become acceptable to God and have power with him. The *altar* here meant is not the brazen altar of 6 : 9, the altar of sacrifice, but the altar of incense within the holy place. To this altar, one cubit square and two cubits high (Exod. 30 : 2), the priest brought twice every day the frankincense that the smoke of the incense, as it arose, might be a symbol that the prayers of the people were acceptable to God. The sense of sin and guilt made a separation between man and God. Through sacrifice atonement was made. Figuratively cleansed from sin, access to God is a source of delight to God. The **golden censer** is a proof that the altar of incense is meant. **And there was given . . . saints**, rather, *And there was given unto him much incense that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints*. In 6 : 10 we heard the cries of the martyred saints ascending to God, asking for vindication upon the persecutors. Here the prayers of all the saints are viewed as upon the altar waiting to be heard. But they lack one essential condition of acceptance, that of mediatorship. The incense is added to the prayers, thereby making them acceptable, giving them power. In vision takes place what we are doing in asking in Jesus' name (John 14 : 14). **Much incense** is added, showing the abundant acceptableness of the prayers. What God does he does like a God, in its fulness and largeness. The incense is given to the angel, thereby showing that the angel is not Jesus himself, the true and complete mediator. It is not a real

angel that thus acts as mediator between the prayers of saints and God the Father. There is a figurative representation of the power of saintly prayer when passing through the intercession of Jesus, powerfully influencing the heavenly agencies. The prayers are those of the suffering church—of the entire church. They are prayers for Jesus to take hold of the affairs of the church, for its safety, for the breaking down of opposition, so that he may reign whose right it is (Ezek. 21 : 27).

4. We behold, in this verse, the power of prayer. **And the smoke . . . saints**, rather, *And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of saints*. The cries of God's suffering children, from many climes, going up to God, through the merit of the intercessor reach God. They are well-pleasing to him. God hears and answers prayer. This fundamental teaching Jesus wished to give to his suffering church of the first century, and of all the centuries. The prayers are addressed, not to a law or fate, or to caprice or accident, but to the person on the throne. We draw near to God through a mediator. In the Old Testament there were priests who stood between men and God. There is now one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2 : 5). These prayers, through Christ, become accepted. In Luke 1 : 10 the people without were praying while the priest offered incense. In heaven, while the incense, in a figurative way, goes up from the altar, the people are praying upon the earth. It is not unreasonable to think that the saints in heaven join their prayers with those on earth that the kingdom may be widened, and God's suffering cause be vindicated.

5. **The angel took**, rather, *taketh*. The fire of the altar, the altar of in-

of the altar, and cast it into [or, upon] 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

and he filled it out of the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. And there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

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

7 And the first sounded ; and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast into the earth ; and

*d* 16 : 18; Ps. 18 : 13; Isa. 30 : 30.

*e* Exod. 9 : 23-25; Ezek. 38 : 22; Joel 2 : 30.

cense, is placed upon the incense in the ceuser. In the Old Testament tabernacle worship, the fire from the altar of sacrifice was used to kindle the incense, uttering thereby the teaching of the New Testament that only through the sacrifice of Jesus can prayer and praise be acceptable. It is taught here, in vision, that the prayers have reached God, that the requests have been granted, and now comes the outward answer. The censer, with the fire of coals from the altar, were thrown upon the earth beneath. Here the church was struggling ; from it cries went up to God. Now comes the answer in penalty upon the earth.<sup>i</sup> In vision were voices and thunderings . . . earthquake, rather, thunder and voices . . . earthquake. The very prayers offered have been answered. The smoke from the censer accompanied the prayers, the fire from the incense now brings destruction and judgment upon the earth. The prayers, therefore, have been cries for God's holiness to manifest itself, for Jesus to gird on his sword and maintain his cause on the earth. The saints move God, and God smites the earth. (Comp. Ps. 18 : 6-9.) We are here at the threshold of this series ; the seven angels have their trumpets ready to announce and do God's will. We have seen the suffering church praying, the interceding Mediator helping greatly, the heavenly Father listening and granting their requests. The earth persecuting will now be the earth suffering.

6. This verse shows a time of trouble. It has been made manifest that God intends now to reveal himself in judgment for his church. What this judgment will be has not yet been revealed. We shall see these judgments, in vision, as the angels sound their trumpets.

John sees them preparing themselves to reveal God's will. There is always a ripening, a coming to completeness of God's plans, an orderly procedure. The first four constitute a group by themselves. The same division into a group of four and three prevails here as in the seals and bowls. These four have one common characteristic : the judgments fall on material things only, things that are incidental and accessory to life. They affect the trees, the grass, the sea, rivers and fountains, the sun giving light to the earth. It is only in the second group that life is touched. They are judgments, suggested by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by the plagues that came upon the people of Egypt when Jehovah had a controversy with Pharaoh. We are not here, any more than in the seals, to trace a history of distinct events. We have rather, in symbols, the nature of all the disturbances through which nations will pass, the judgments upon them. We have the nature of God's dealings with his foes presented, including all that takes place in history. But the definite persons and events we do not attempt to delineate. Prophecy is not simply history written beforehand, so that we can fit the book and a church history into each other, finding distinct ages and distinct events under each trumpet.

7. THE FIRST ANGEL SOUNDS. The first angel, rather, *And the first*. As a direct result of the sounding of the trumpet, there follows a vision before the eyes of the seer. **Hail . . . blood.** This finds illustration in Joel's prophecy (2 : 28-32). In describing the day of Jehovah Joel mentions the blessed bestowal of the Holy Spirit, fulfilled at Pentecost, and also the appearance of blood, fire, and vapor, meaning thereby disasters upon those rejecting Jesus.

earth: and the <sup>f</sup>third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, <sup>g</sup>and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: <sup>i</sup>and the third part of the sea <sup>k</sup>became blood; <sup>l</sup>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.

the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the 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; <sup>g</sup>and the third part of the creatures that are in the sea, that have life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

*f* Ezek. 5:12.

*g* 9:4; Isa. 2:13; 10:19.

*h* Jer. 51:25; Amos 7:4.

*i* 16:3.

*k* Exod. 7:17-21.

*l* 16:3.

"Blood-red rain is not unknown in nature; in the spring of 1901 the daily journals contained accounts of this pheuomenon, which was being witnessed in Italy and the south of Europe, the result as it seemed, of the air being full of particles of fine red sand from the Sahara" (SWETE). In Exod. 9:24 we have hail and fire sent as a plague. Here is the added feature of *blood*. Some refer this to aggressive war made by one nation upon another as the result and penalty of sin. It is wise and more in accord with the spirit of the book, not to refer this to any definite plague, pestilence, war, or judgment upon the wicked. In this vision the land is visited in judgment, in distinction from the sea and the bodies that give light to men. Originally the land, the trees, the grass, and all things were made for man and his enjoyment. Now it is taught, in vision, that all these things made for man are blighted by a curse on account of wrong-doing. We are not to understand that the terms **land, grass**, are to be taken in a literal sense. Men will suffer just as if these were destroyed. Some interpreters, attempting to find a meaning in every term used, regard the trees as the leaders of the people, and the grass as the great mass of men, the common people. We must not attempt to find meanings in every word. As in the parables of Christ, many things are here introduced simply as drapery to fill in the narrative and bring out the main thought the more effectively. The result of this judgment is, **and the third part of the earth was burnt up**, that is, a third part of the surface of the earth. Of the trees on this third part only one-third is burned up, but all the

green grass. It is impossible to tell why the fraction one-third is chosen. Three destructive agencies are employed, *fire, hail, blood*. This may have suggested the number. The number three fills a large place in the structure of the entire book. There is here portrayed penalty, but not an utter destruction. There are in God's hands heavier penalties yet to come.

**8, 9. THE SECOND TRUMPET NOW IS SOUNDED.** In this vision the sea, as distinct from the land, is touched by the hand of God. The whole range of nature, sea and land, thus comes under God's retributive power. **As it were a great mountain burning with fire.** This judgment is akin to that mentioned in Jer. 51:25. Something in the nature of a volcano is indicated. Such a scene would impress the mind as a most fearful judgment, making great convulsions, destroying life and property. The plagues of Egypt are again drawn upon to add fearfulness to the scene. The river of Egypt was changed into blood (Exod. 7:20, 21); here the sea is changed into blood. The great power displayed in hurling the mountain into the sea, a figure used by Jesus in Matt. 21:21, the fearful effects produced, deeply impress the mind. The sea became blood; thereby the fish died; the ships were destroyed, perhaps, by the burning mountain. The terms **sea** and **land** are not used in a metaphorical sense, meaning Jewish and Gentile nations, but rather the whole range of human life, represented by the entire world. Some interpreters who wish to find specific events mentioned, find this vision fulfilled in the overthrow of pagan Rome by the irruption of the barbarians, by the convulsions in

10 And the third angel sounded, <sup>m</sup>and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, <sup>n</sup>and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called <sup>o</sup>Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

10 And the third angel sounded; and there fell out of heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell on the third part of the rivers, and on the fountains of the 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.

*m* 9 : 1; Isa. 14 : 12.

*n* 16 : 4.

*o* Deut. 29 : 18; Prov. 5 : 4; Jer. 9 : 15; 23 : 15; Lam. 3 : 15, 19.

*p* Exod. 15 : 23.

society brought about through the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. However fittingly they may be indicated by the vision, we may not regard these events as specifically described. Rather in large and bold outlines is presented a vision of judgments and disasters upon wicked men and nations, brought upon them by their own sin. It is as if God punished them by these physical disasters. Here also the one-third is made use of, a partial destruction to be followed by yet heavier. It cannot be taken in a strict mathematical sense, but means a large destruction but a merciful restraining so that the one-third has not become the whole.

**10, 11. THE THIRD ANGEL SOUNDS HIS TRUMPET.** There is a growing intensity in the visions. In the first vision inanimate nature alone suffered. In the second the living creatures in the sea were brought under judgment. In the third the immediate sources of life, the fountains of water, are touched, and men suffer and die. **Great star.** In Isa. 14 : 12 Babylon is spoken of as a star fallen from heaven. In Dan. 12 : 3 those winning men to righteousness shine as the stars. In this book the angels of the churches are called stars (1 : 20). Some have interpreted this great star to mean some great heretical teacher like Arius of the third century, who denied the deity of Jesus; or other false teacher, perverting the truth, in the past or in the future. Others refer it to despotic power whereby the lives of men have been made bitter in Egypt (Exod. 1 : 14). As John is moving here in the domain of nature, on earth and in the sky, making use of sea, land, volcano, also of star and sun, it is probable that there is no metaphorical use of the term. Every

part of nature, on earth and above, everything that contributes to man's life and enjoyment, all are brought under God's ban. All make war on man, every part of nature suffers. In this symbolic way Jesus shows to John that God touches in judgment every surrounding of life. **Lamp, rather, torch.** This vision shows the rivers and fountains touched by judgment. Life itself is supported by the fountains. The water used for sustaining life becomes a factor of death. The star is called **Wormwood.** (Comp. Jer. 23 : 15; Deut. 24 : 18.) In the wilderness the bitter waters of Marah were made sweet (Exod. 15 : 25); here the sweet waters are made bitter. Something deadly seems here to be meant, as in Jer. 9 : 15. "The Hebrew word is employed in the Old Testament as a metaphor for (1) the perversion of justice (Amos 5 : 7; 6 : 12); (2) the bitter fruits of idolatry (Deut. 29 : 17); (3) Divine chastisements (Jer. 9 : 15)" (SWETE). Wormwood mixed with water does not kill; but the rivers and fountains changed into wormwood did destroy many. The vision describes the lives of the ungodly as made bitter. The disappointments in heart, the failure of plans, the mutual antagonisms between men and nations, the direct judgments of God, these unite to make the life of the ungodly a bitter thing. God makes it ill for the wicked (Isa. 57 : 21). As the ages go on and light increases, there is a constantly increasing warfare upon the ungodly. One-third part is affected with the result: **many men died.** For the first time human life is touched. Alford gives a practical illustration, in the material realm, of poison at the fountain of life, in the drink traffic, whereby a large part of the human

**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.

**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, that the third part of them might be darkened, and the day not shine for a third part of it, and the night in like manner.

*q 16:8; Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:10; Amos 8:9.*

race is brought under a curse. The Greek word here rendered *wormwood* is "absinthe." A thousand illustrations may be found in every period that fit into and fill out this vision. The poisoning of the waters in the domain of nature is a picture of the poisoning of the springs of life in the social, intellectual, and spiritual realms of life. While nothing definite is portrayed so that we can locate it in history by a definite event, there is a distinct impression made upon the mind of the beholder of these dread convulsions in nature, growing more and more intense as the trumpets sound, that everything that God made for a blessing and a help becomes a source of bitterness and punishment. The death seen in vision reveals something more than the mere physical effects on man. The death stands for the completest penalty in man—sorrow, wretchedness, involving also spiritual death.

**12, 13. THE FOURTH ANGEL SOUNDS.** Destruction widens out as it travels on in the trumpets. Everything that concerns man has a judgment upon it. Here the sun, moon, and stars suffer a blighting judgment. They are touched because it is from them that light comes to men. Without them human life would be unbearable and impossible. The sun gives brightness to life. The moon and stars add joy and beauty to the night-time, In order to complete the visions, to show that the ungodly must suffer on every side, around and above, by land and by sea, in river and fountain, by the cutting off of life, the heavens now, in vision, suffer a blight. Here also is a reminiscence of the Egyptian plagues, when darkness came, as a penalty, over the land (*Exod. 10:21-23*). The smitten sun shines for only a third part of the day; the smitten moon and stars shine for only a part of the night. The third part holds sway in the first

four trumpets. Those interpreters who find historical events alluded to in every vision, see in the reference to the darkening sun and heavens a prophecy of the dark ages that rested for centuries upon Europe, a period when spiritual and moral darkness prevailed to a large extent. It is better, however, to find no allusion here to distinct events in history, but to see portrayed in an impressive way, the misery, the unrest, the darkness that must come upon the ungodly, whether from war, from convulsions in nature, from oppression, from the darkening of the mind, the shutting out of God's light and peace. In many and manifold ways God can shut out peace and joy from the heart. The sun stands for peace, light, joy, God's presence and blessing. Its darkening means sorrow, wretchedness, calamity, disaster. Such sorrow comes upon the ungodly, not in Europe alone, but everywhere, as if the sun in the firmament were smitten. God built up creation for man's residence. In the creative days we see the world emerging in beauty from chaos; order holds rule. The sea, the grass and trees, the rivers and fountains, the sun, moon, and stars, all fill their places and serve man's interests. Here, under the power of sin, we see the order reversed. Everything, from the lowest created thing to the most majestic, refuses to work for man. This is Christ's way of saying that God is against man in his sinning and guilty state.

**13. THE THREE WOES ANNOUNCED.** With the sounding of the first four trumpets, we naturally look for a break in the order of events. The churches were divided into groups of four and three, the seals were divided in the same way. In the orderly and methodical structure of the entire book, we see the same distinct grouping of the four trumpets that have already sounded, and three of a distinct nature

*The seven trumpets—Sounding of the fifth trumpet, or first woe.*

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 !

r 14 : 6; 19 : 17.

s 9 : 12; 11 : 14; Joel 2 : 1; Matt. 24 : 21, 22.

13 And I saw, and heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound !

now to sound. **Heard an angel,** rather, *an eagle; midst of heaven,* rather, *mid heaven.* The eagle flies in the meridian sky where every eye may see, where also it may scan the entire horizon. The eagle is a bird of majesty, also of plunder, of ferocity. Here it adds additional terror to the scene. Jesus alludes to the eagle's coming when dark times come (Matt. 24 : 28). Its cry is a thrice repeated **woe.** **Inhabiters of the earth,** rather, *that dwell on the earth.* Great calamities have been described, more dread ones are yet to come. The persons upon whom they are to come are the ungodly people, the earthly minded people. The church, the godly party, may suffer, to some extent, because on the earth, dwelling among the ungodly, but the judgments are designed only for the ungodly. By means of the four trumpets which have already sounded, no effectual results have been obtained. The cause of wickedness has not been crushed. Although the world has been stricken in all its sources of supply, yet multitudes still cling to it as their portion, reject Christ the rightful ruler of the world, oppose the gospel. Therefore God takes now more effective measures. They are seen to be distinctive because they bring to an end the opposition, throw the ungodly world into confusion that the cause of righteousness and truth may be established in the earth. God announces the coming of heavier judgments, that through repentance men may avoid them. The threats against Nineveh made a repenting Nineveh. A repenting Nineveh became a saved Nineveh. In like manner God always loves to bestow mercy. He delights not in judgment; he does delight in mercy. The only way in which a man can escape the coming judgment is by escaping to God.

**NOTE. THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.** Historical interpreters find, in the first four trumpets, a complete chronological history of the opening centuries of the Christian era. Barnes, Elliot, and others find in these trumpets distinct allusions to the four invasions of the Roman empire by the Gothic tribes from 400 to 476 A. D. Historical correspondences may be found in these events, but others might be found that would correspond with equal definiteness. It is a mistake to think that we must locate these judgments in actual history, one part upon the earth, another part upon the sea. We may not attempt to map out these visions upon the chart of history. Scarcely any two interpreters would agree as to the details. It cannot be demanded of any interpreter that he shall match these symbols one by one with distinct historical events, places, and judgments. This would be to mistake the nature of symbolic teaching. It is better to regard these as pointing out, in a general way, the judgments of God upon a wicked world. In ever new and recurring ways the forces of the world—social, business, intellectual, political—rise up against God. Against them God sends his judgments. Through centuries God deals patiently with men. The world does not lay down its arms of opposition. Whenever the conflict is joined and a distinct issue is made, the victory is seen to be on the side of God. His righteousness and his almighty assure this result. Everywhere through history we may find historical illustrations of the trumpets, but we may not regard them as other than illustrations. Israel was called out of Egypt (Hosea 11 : 1). Matthew makes use of this to show the calling of Jesus from Egypt (Matt. 2 : 15). It was more nearly an illustration of Hosea's statement than a fulfilment of

a prediction made by Hosea. In like manner we are at liberty to find illustrations in history, of judgments in manifold ways coming upon the ungodly element in the world, without affirming, at the same time, that the event was definitely predicted. Many centuries have passed away since Christianity was introduced on the earth. How many centuries will yet elapse before the ending of this era no one may predict. We may hold definitely to the following points: the four trumpets do not of necessity follow each other in close succession in order of time; they do not have definite limits of time; the same judgments may come again and again; the judgments may overlap each other in order of time; we may not definitely locate the visions in order of time or place; they predict, in outline, the manifold ways in which God can change that which was meant to be a blessing to life so that it may become a hindrance and a curse. God rules and overrules.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Sometimes the saints of God can do nothing but pray. Through the power of prayer God's cause is widened, opposition breaks down, help comes. Real prayers are stored up in heaven (ver. 3).

2. We need a mediator in drawing near to God. One is furnished us in Jesus Christ. Not the mere mention of his name will avail to bring answer to prayer, but a union with Christ, a submission to his will, a dependence on him (ver. 3).

3. We need no angelic mediation when we have a mighty Saviour who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Having Jesus we need neither men or angels to help us (ver. 3).

4. There is a power in united prayer. The prayer of one righteous man availeth much (James 5 : 16). The prayers of all the saints unitedly come before God. The church on its knees means a God moved, a world blessed, the counsel of the wicked coming to naught (ver. 4).

5. Prayers that reach heaven are answered on the earth. No one is weak or alone who has a prayer-hearing God on his side. Queen Mary feared the prayers of John Knox. The saint of God on his

knees may do more than the soldier with his sword (ver. 5).

6. God knows how to use judgments, converting even the things made for blessings into penalties. Even in his judgments there is tenderness involved, the desire that they may turn men to repentance (ver. 7).

7. Even in wrath God remembers mercy. He does not pour out so much of penalty as he can or as is deserved (ver. 8).

8. God can curse our blessings so that the things made for our use will become our enemies. No one may wisely fight against God. He can make even our enemies to be at peace with us; he can change the designed blessings of life into burdens and penalties (ver. 7).

9. The ways and wages of sin are, in the end, bitterness to the soul. Sin brings disappointment, it gives wormwood to drink (ver. 11).

10. The Lord is a sun and a shield, giving grace, guidance, light, glory. Sin darkens the sun, destroys peace, makes the pathway dark. The pathway of the just grows brighter and brighter. God is light. God makes light in the heart. The man who is like God dwells in the light and walks in the light (ver. 12; 1 John 2 : 10).

11. There are gradations in punishment as well as in blessings. In the unseen life there are differing penalties (Luke 12 : 48); as also differing degrees of award (Luke 19 : 17). God is just as well as merciful (ver. 13).

12. God gives warning of the danger of sin and of approaching doom. No one can be lost who does not sin against counsel, grace, and warning. Sin is foolishness as well as recklessness and wickedness (ver. 13).

#### CHAPTER IX.

Sorrows and judgments were revealed in the first four trumpets, but they were light compared with those about to be revealed. A great break occurs between the first group of four and the last group of three, in that we now come into closer contact with a Satanic power. In the fifth seal we had a glimpse into the abode of the blessed, where the souls of the martyred called

**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. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a

**9** AND the fifth angel sounded; and I saw a star fallen out of the heaven into the earth, and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss, and

*t 8 : 10; Luke 10 : 18.*    *u Ver. 11 : 17 : 8 ; 20 : 1; Luke 8 : 31.*    *x Joel 2 : 2, 10; Gen. 19 : 28.*

upon the holy God for vengeance upon the wicked. Here, on the other hand, we see the abyss, the abode of darkness, opened, and its fearful effects upon the wicked dwelling on the earth. Both heaven and hell are closely related to earth. The saints in heaven pray that God's cause may be victorious upon the earth, the hosts of darkness come from their abode to work torments on men. Unseen by men, both spiritual worlds are real in nature, and lie close to human history in their influence upon it. Three worlds are concerned in the making of the present: the world of men, the world of light, the world of darkness. There is a constant growth in the intensity of the agencies at work. In the first trumpet the judgment is upon vegetation, in the second upon animal life, in the third upon man, in the fourth upon the sources of light upon which all life depends. In the fifth the judgment is upon the entire intellectual and moral life of the ungodly, whereby life itself becomes intolerable.

In this chapter we have the sounding of the fifth trumpet, with the fallen star, the opening of the abyss, the locusts that torment men, over whom is a king, Abaddon (ver. 1-12); the sounding of the sixth trumpet, with the unloosing of the angels, the innumerable host of horses, frightful in appearance (ver. 13-19); the impenitent world, remaining hard under the severest judgments (ver. 20, 21).

#### 1-12. THE FIFTH TRUMPET SOUNDS.

This is the first woe trumpet.

**I. A star . . . unto the earth,** rather, *a star fallen from heaven unto the earth.* John did not see the star falling from heaven, he saw it when fallen. In 8 : 10 he saw a star falling, saw its descent. The time of the fall is not here indicated. In this book the term, star, stands as a symbol of a potentate or power. The star represents the angel of the churches (1 : 20). In 12 : 7-9 we have the fact of the expulsion of Satan from the heavenly

life. In 22 : 16 Jesus is called the Morning Star. The fallen star is Satan, the king of the opposite and contrasted kingdom of darkness. In John 8 : 44 it is stated that Satan stood not in the truth, implying that he was a fallen being. In the star fallen is the affirmation that, at one time, Satan was in a blessed life, but by his own transgression fell. The fall of the star may find illustration in Isa. 14 : 12 and Luke 10 : 18, though it cannot be affirmed that this passage refers to the same events. **To him was given.** There is proof here of intelligence and personality. The fallen star is a person. Jesus has the keys of hades and the grave (1 : 18); here the opposite thought is that Satan is placed in possession of the key of the pit of darkness. It is not stated by whom the key is given, but it is implied that all created beings, good angels and evil angels, have only a limited and dependent power. Satan is potent, but God only is omnipotent.

**Of the bottomless pit, rather, of the pit of the abyss.** The conception of the abyss is that it is deeply located in the earth; very deep, but limited in its area, so that it can be covered over with a covering, and sealed (20 : 3). This abyss is the penal home of demons, evil spirits. The same word, abyss, is used in 17 : 8; 20 : 3, and Luke 8 : 31. It embraces the thought of what we mean by hell, where lost spirits and lost men will find their abode.

**2. Straightway the action begins.** **Opened . . . pit, rather, the pit of the abyss.** In vision John sees a smoke out of the pit. It is conceived of as so dense and black as to fill the air and obscure the sun. God is light (1 John 1 : 5); sin is darkness (1 John 1 : 8). Conversion is a coming out of darkness into light (1 Peter 2 : 9). Satan and his angels are the world rulers of this darkness (Eph. 6 : 12). Men can no longer see distinctly; everything is looked at in distorted and indistinct ways. The darkening may involve the social, political, intellectual, moral,

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. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, <sup>z</sup>as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was commanded them <sup>a</sup>that they should not hurt <sup>b</sup>the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not <sup>c</sup>the seal of God in their fore-

there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by 3 reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts into the earth; and there was given to them authority, as the scorpions of the 4 earth have authority. And it was said to them, that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who have not the seal of God on their fore-

<sup>y</sup> Exod. 10:4; Judg. 7:12. <sup>z</sup> Ver. 10.

<sup>a</sup> 6:6; 7:3. <sup>b</sup> 8:7. <sup>c</sup> 7:3; Exod. 12:23; Ezek. 9:4.

and spiritual relations of man. The very air through which men naturally see clearly is obscured and darkened. Satan is himself embodied ugliness, malignity, falsehood, a disturber of moral order and beauty. He is himself darkness, he makes darkness. He throws darkness over the Bible, over God's existence and nature, over the soul's needs and its highest interests. Satan may so intensify the wickedness of men that "darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people" (Isa. 60:2). **Furnace.** In many places in the New Testament the dwelling-place of the lost is conceived of under the figure of a fire. There is the unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:10, 12); the tares shall be burned up (Matt. 13:30); the wicked shall be cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

**3. And . . . earth,** rather, *And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth.* John does not declare that the locusts came out of the pit, but it cannot be doubted that he means so to intimate. He sees them issuing from the dense clouds. The locust was an object of terror to Oriental countries. It is used here in that sense. For what or for whom do these locusts stand? Many answers have been given. The historical interpreters find reference to the Goths and Vandals who invaded Rome. Many find allusions to the Mohammedans who, in the seventh and following centuries, made havoc with the sword in spreading their beliefs. Some find in the fallen star allusion to the pope and his servants, the monks and priests. We may fix in our minds this conclusion, that there is no reference to literal locusts such as came in Joel's day, and formed the foundation for a large part of his prophetic teach-

ings (Joel 1, 2); nor to armies represented by locusts, for they do not hurt the godly (ver. 4). The entire scene is Satanic in character, the pit, the smoke, the locusts. In the previous trumpets nature had been, in a symbolic way, warring upon the ungodly; now the world of darkness itself makes war upon them. The natural locust does not hurt men, but these are creatures of the pit and are scorpionlike in their nature. **As the scorpions of the earth have power.** They sting and poison men. It is as if the locust, with a scorpion power, were everywhere swept through the air to light upon the ungodly and sting them, and make life thereby unbearable. What the natural locust does in the vegetable world, thereby indirectly hurting men, these locusts, Satanic in origin, do directly to men themselves, in a higher realm of working.

**4. It was commanded them,** rather, *said to them.* It is not stated who spoke the words. But it is indicated that everything that takes place is under the ultimate divine control. There is a wide divergence between the common locusts and those here described. These do not hurt the **grass . . . tree.** In a symbolic way these were hurt under the first trumpet. These locusts work on a higher plane, hurting men. It is a more distressing plague than the preceding in that it touches, not the objects about men, but men themselves. The command not to hurt the grass—their natural food—brings out very clearly the scene of their work, and the singleness of their work, upon and among men. They are to hurt **only those . . . foreheads,** rather, *only such men as have not the seal of God on their forehead.*

5 heads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, <sup>4</sup>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:

*d* Ver. 10; 11:7.

*e* 6:16; Job 3:21;

Isa. 2:19; Jer. 8:3.

*f* Joel 2:4, 5.

We have here a reminiscence of the sealing of God's people in 7:3. In that passage between the fifth and sixth seals the winds were restrained from blowing upon the earth until God's people were sealed. The regeneration in character, the outward holy life, the guidings of divine providence, were as a shield about God's people; they were as safe as if sealed upon the forehead. The reference cannot, by any possibility, be to the Mohammedan persecution or to papal persecutions, for their rage was spent upon those who were the people of God. It was their expressed aim to extirpate a pure Christianity from the face of the earth. Jesus, in his final discourses, spoke of the safety of the sealed, "If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). Whatever the trumpet means it cannot refer to persecutions that fall upon Christians alone, or upon saint and sinner alike. The operation of this trumpet is limited to the ungodly alone.

**5. And to them . . . them.** There is to be for the ungodly, not death, but torment. The death comes in the next trumpet. The reference cannot be to any persecution upon the cause of Christ, to any Mohammedan invasion or persecution in the dark ages when death, sudden and fierce, came upon the followers of Christ. The time of the torment is for **five months**. It is said that five months is the time during which the locust continues its ravages. As the locust has its period, so also have these Satanic locusts. No literal period of time, five months or one hundred and fifty years, that is, a year for a day, is here meant to be understood. All that can be understood is that all plagues have their origin, their law of development, go through their natural course, and come

5 heads. And it was given to them, 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 strikes a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death, and shall by no means find it; and they will desire to die, and death flees 7 from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for

to an end. As the locusts have their period of five months, so have these locusts their corresponding five months. All plagues have their limitations, under God's guidance. This locust plague, in the domain of the spiritual life, is also limited. As the natural locust came upon the ancient Israel, as the manifestation of God's anger, so this plague is the result of sin—of sin punishing sin. The torment is poisonous and violent as when the scorpion strikes a man.

**6. The torment will be fearful in nature.** Death will be regarded as desirable, but it will not come. In the fifth seal men seek after death (6:16). Death will be sought as a friend, but **death . . . them**, rather, **death fleeth from them**. In the case of Job, Satan's direct punishment was so restrained that death did not come (Job 2:6). But in his sufferings he longed for death (3:11, 20). Here the sufferings are so intense that death seems to be a deliverance, but it cannot be found. It is a living death when life becomes utterly intolerable, when all joy has departed. Sin makes life burdensome; it becomes its own punishment. It brings positive injury to the soul of man; it also keeps away all the blessed influences of the gospel which would heal and help men. There are seducing spirits that lead the ungodly to such lies as will bring only wretchedness, darkness, despair. They steal away faith, they banish right conceptions of God, they make the present joyless and the future hopeless, they destroy the foundations of society and moral order.

**7-11.** A description of the locusts is found in these verses. In general the **shapes . . . were like unto horses prepared for battle**, rather, **war**. The horse was, in the Old Testament, a symbol of war, hence its use was for-

**s**and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, <sup>b</sup> and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and <sup>i</sup> their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was <sup>k</sup> as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: <sup>l</sup> and their power was to hurt men five

battle; and on their heads as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running into battle. And they have tails like scorpions, and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt

g Nahum 3:17.

h Dan. 7:8.

i Joel 1:6.

k Joel 2:5-7.

l Ver. 5.

bidden to the people of Israel. The locusts in their ravages are like the horse in appearance and in their mission. The resemblance of the locust to the horse is so noticeable that the similarity is expressed in the term defining the locust in the German and Italian languages. These locusts have come to make war upon men. In the detailed description given it is in general confined to the actual description of the locust, although features are introduced that show this to be an idealized creature, nowhere existing in nature. We have a sevenfold description. **Their heads . . . gold**, rather, and upon their heads, as it were, crowns like unto gold. A mark of gold upon the forehead suggests the idea of a crown. Ideally it becomes to the seer as it were a crown like gold. In his sight they are a conquering host, kinglike beings. **Their faces as the faces of men.** There is a certain appearance about the locust's face that suggests a human face. As war is made upon the ungodly alone, there is a certain intelligence displayed which renders this reference fitting. They had also the boldness and courage of men. **Hair as the hair of women.** There may have been a something resembling the hair of women in the natural locust. What the seer would indicate by this cannot be known. As it is kinglike in conquering, manlike in intelligence, so also there may be included the idea of softness, of seduction, of lasciviousness. **Teeth . . . lions.** The lion and the locust ravenously destroy their prey. Joel makes the same comparison (1:6). Satan is also compared to a lion (1 Peter 5:8). **Breastplates of iron.** The seer, thinking of the conquering work of the messengers of Satan, sees in the

structure of the locust a resemblance to a man prepared for war. It is not a real breastplate of the soldier, but something like it. **Sound of wings . . . battle**, rather, *war*. In Joel's day (chap. 1, 2) the invading force of locusts was as a mighty army, marching irresistibly upon them, destroying as they went. Nothing could withstand them. The sound of their wings, when in flight, could be heard afar. These Satanic hosts come, in like manner, upon the ungodly men. They deceive, they hurt, they torment. How sad the condition of men upon whom Satan makes organized war, whose hearts are open to his attacks. **Tails like scorpions.** This repeats, in part, what is said in ver. 5. If the locust has no sting, then this feature is added to give additional terror to the scene. It is something to which nothing in the natural locust corresponds. The sealed man cannot be really hurt, though he may suffer discipline, and may suffer in the world with the ungodly, because bound up with them in social life. But the ungodly man is hurt in his real self. The hurt will end in that final and eternal hurt of the entire being from which the saved are exempt (2:11). **And . . . months**, rather, *And they have tails like unto scorpions and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months.* They are savage and seize like lions; they have intelligence like men; they have a certain effeminacy about them; they are under thorough discipline like an army; they are conquerors; they have a kinglike royalty about them; they are armed for the contest, but their chief power is in the sting which is characteristic of the scorpion. The locust and the scorpion are combined to illustrate their malicious hurt.

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

*The seven trumpets—Sounding of the sixth trumpet, or second woe.*

12 °ONE woe is past; and, behold, there come <sup>p</sup>two woes more hereafter.

11 men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has a name, Apollyon.

12 The first woe is past; behold, there come yet two woes hereafter.

<sup>m</sup> Eph. 2:2.

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 1.

<sup>o</sup> 8:13.

<sup>p</sup> Ver. 13-21; 8:13; 11:14.

**11.** One point of dissimilarity is noticed. **And . . . them**, rather, *And they have a king over them*. It is said in Prov. 30:27, “The locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands.” The locusts, seen in vision, have a king over them, controlling, directing them in their warfare upon men. Jesus taught that the world of spiritual darkness is an organized kingdom (Matt. 12:26). **And they . . . pit**, rather, *They have over them as king the angel of the abyss*. The angel of the abyss, the fallen star, the one having the key of the pit are to be regarded as one. Some think that this angel is different from the person meant by the fallen star. It is in entire harmony with the spirit of this book to speak of Satan as an angel, as having charge of a sphere of work. Everywhere in this book, the one having control of anything is spoken of as the angel of that thing. Compare the angels of the winds (7:1); the angels of the waters (5:14). The angel of the abyss is that one who represents the evil agencies and powers which dwell there. He is the concentrated energy and meaning of the abyss, the guardian of the lowest deep of moral evil. He is Satan defined by Paul as the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:21). His name corresponds to his nature and work. **Abaddon**. This is an abstract word, meaning perdition, though it is usually employed for the place of destruction (Job 26:6; 28:22; Ps. 88:12; Rev. 15:11). **Apollyon** means destroying, here a destroyer. The king and his host are described as to their nature and mission by the name of the king; he is destruction personified, he makes a perdition. Jesus came to save, not to destroy (Luke 19:11). This king comes to destroy, not to save. We shall gain nothing by attempting to

locate this vision in any definite historical event or place. It cannot be referred, as by so many interpreters, to the Mohammedan invasion, for this is upon the world of the ungodly. It cannot refer to wars and outward calamities alone. It is a distinctly spiritual woe, it came from the abyss, it is symbolized by dark clouds, horrible and unearthly creatures. It signifies a great revival of spiritual wickedness, wherein the prince of darkness works upon the hearts of the ungodly, making life bitter and sorrowful, so that even death seems more to be desired than life. Such times have been, may come again. “It shall be ill with the wicked,” here and hereafter (Isa. 3:11). This trumpet scene may find partial fulfilment in the fearful scenes of the first century, in the dark ages, in many of the nineteen centuries past, at many periods of human history. Does this trumpet scene teach that Satan persecutes his own people, makes war upon his own kingdom? It teaches that sin always brings disaster to the man that sins; that sin is its own worst punishment; that the service of Satan is a severe service, bringing, in the long run, not blessing but a curse. In this life sin may make a modified hell.

**12.** One of the woes announced in 7:7 is past. **One woe**, rather, *the first*. He does not mean that the fulfilment of the woe is past in order of time, but that as seen in vision it is past. The seer has beheld it in its completion. But not yet is the end. **Behold . . . hereafter**, rather, *Behold there come yet two woes hereafter*. There is something more august and dreadful about the trumpets than about the seals. There was no pause between the fifth and sixth seals. But here there is the announcement in addition to the general announcement already

**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

**13** And the sixth angel sounded; and I heard a voice out of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,  
**14** one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels

*q 8:3; Exod. 27:2.*

made (8:13) that two woes are yet to come. Attention is called to it. *Behold.* It is hard to fight against God. Pharaoh was crushed at last (Exod. 12:31). So will, in like manner, the ungodly be crushed and humbled. God keeps his greatest blessings to the last (John 2:11); also his greatest punishments.

**13-19. THE SIXTH TRUMPET.** This is more severe than the fifth in that many men here are killed. The torment gives way to dying. The fifth trumpet moved in the region of the Satanic influences upon men; the locusts were not natural, but preter-natural. This is the second woe trumpet.

**13. I heard a voice from the four horns.** Omit *four*. At each of the corners of the altar was a projection, a horn, to which, on the altar of burnt offering, the sacrificial victim might be tied, to which also a worshiper might cling, inasmuch as the altar was a place of refuge for a person in danger (Ps. 118:27; 1 Kings 1:50). This altar is the one described in 8:3, the altar of incense, on which the prayers of saints are figuratively said to be placed. It is an altar **before God**, signifying that God is concerned about the prayers of his children. They are near to him. All things are open to his gaze, but the concerns of God's people are especially dear to him. They naturally reach him and influence him. The praying man may be assured that he is praying, not to a fate or a law, but to a personal God and Father. Prayers are, therefore, reasonable, and because they reach God they are powerful. After the seventh seal there were thunders and voices when the coals from the censer were thrown upon the earth (8:5). In a figurative way this action declared that prayers sent to heaven have an influence upon the earth. Here again it is implied that it is in answer to prayer that the judgments come upon the world of the ungodly. A voice from the altar is God's answer, in judgment, to the

prayers upon the altar. It may, perhaps, be implied that all in the series of judgments is in answer to the petitions of the saints on earth. The saints may be helpless in themselves, but through their prayers God's judgments come to their help. We are not told who utters the voice; it is, in vision, to be understood as meaning the audible reply to the prayers of the faithful and holy on the earth. In reality, it is God's voice.

**14.** We have here the contents of the voice. **Loose . . . in the great river Euphrates**, rather, *at*. **Loose.** This term implies that there had been some restraining power as in the case of the four winds which were, for a time, held back from blowing on the earth (7:1). Blessings are dependent upon God. The severity of trials can be mitigated by him. Satan's power and ravages are under God's control. It is of God to decide whether the four angels shall be loosed and when.

**Four.** It is surmised by some that these four angels are the same ones described in 7:1. It may be doubted, however, whether four real angels are here meant. They may stand merely for God's direct control over the judgments here portrayed. The *four* indicates the world-wide nature of this judgment, inasmuch as there are four quarters of the world. There is the unloosing, the freeing, of some agency that will be world-wide in its nature and sweep. In this book the angel of anything is simply the thing itself in activity, in the fulfilment of its own mission. The angels of the winds are simply the winds themselves. The angels at the Euphrates are simply the Euphrates as under God's control, serving his holy will. The river is used in a symbolic sense, for John is not writing a book of actual history or geography. As an actual river it was the boundary line between the land of the Israelites and the great nations of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Damascus beyond it. It was, on that side,

which are bound in the great river  
15 Euphrates. 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.

who are bound at the great river  
15 Euphrates. And the four angels were  
loosed, who had been prepared for the  
hour and day and month and year,  
that they might kill the third part of

r 16 : 12; Gen. 2 : 14.

the limit of the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15 : 18). It was also a defense of the Israelitish people against the powers beyond, constituting a natural bulwark. Inasmuch as there were invasions from beyond this river, so that the ten tribes had been carried captive to Assyria in 721 B. C., it became the symbol of great oppression, of captivity, of national subjugation, of unconquerable foes, the enemy of God and his people. In 2 Kings 18 the Assyrian invader boasted of the strength of his gods in contrast with the insignificance of Jehovah. The Euphrates stood, therefore, for an organized heathenism, the opposition to godliness. The waters of this river sometimes overflowed its banks, an illustration of the dangers that came from beyond the river. Isaiah speaks in his prophecy (8 : 5-8) of the river Euphrates overflowing the entire land of Judea, meaning that his country would come under the control of the Assyrian nation. To the people of the Old Testament times, prophets and people, the river became a symbol of the most destructive judgments that could come upon the chosen people. There is not the slightest allusion here to the literal river; this would be entirely out of place in a vision. If the plague portrayed should come from any quarter of the compass this symbol could appropriately be used. When John wrote, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Damascus, all the nations that had triumphed over them were long since dead. But the Euphrates, as a figure, would always stand as the symbol of danger, captivity, disaster, overthrow. It is in this sense that it is employed here. As in the olden time God permitted idolatry and disobedience to be punished by the nations beyond the river, so now God intends to punish the idolatry, the disobedience of the ungodly, the apostasy of his people, by something akin to that. The Euphrates is, in vision and for moral purposes, a real river still. It is just as if from

another Euphrates a storm of invasion should come to do God's work. There must be dismissed from the mind all reference to a literal river or a literal invasion from that quarter of the world. Moving in symbolic teachings we must inquire simply what that river meant to the Jewish people. Everywhere and always it would stand for an ungodly and overpowering might, a power before which the nations like Judah were utterly powerless, a power that could subdue and take captive even the people of God when living in disobedience to the Most High. The *four* does not have any reference to four kingdoms or powers that had or would oppress the world, but serves to designate the world-wide character of the disaster that would come upon ungodliness.

**15.** What God purposes is speedily done; the angels were loosed. God's providences and punishments occur in accordance with forethought and preparation. These angels had been bound until an appointed time. *Prepared . . . year*, rather, *prepared for the hour and day and month and year*. The Revised version gives an altogether different thought from that given in the Common version. We are not permitted to combine these four terms as indicating the time appointed for loosing them, or the time during which the visitation is to last. All refer to the same point of time. Not only is the year marked out in the divine plan, but the month, the day, the hour. Jesus, in his earthly ministry, recognized the fitting, the appointed time, "my hour" (John 2 : 4). There is a plan of God in the world, a plan embracing what God designs and what God permits; permitting a Nineveh to ravage his vineyard, and then punishing Nineveh for its haughtiness and oppression. Under and through all history, with its human elements, its seeming accidents, under all is God's purpose, working ever to carry out his ends. At the fitting time comes the

- 16 And <sup>a</sup> the number of the army <sup>b</sup> of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand : <sup>c</sup> 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 : <sup>d</sup> and the heads
- 16 men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred thousand thousand : I heard the number of them.
- 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those who sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of hyacinth, and of brimstone ; and the

<sup>s</sup> Ps. 68 : 17; Dan. 7 : 10; Joel 2 : 11.      <sup>t</sup> Ezek. 38 : 4.

<sup>u</sup> 7 : 4.      <sup>x</sup> 1 Chron. 12 : 8; Isa. 5 : 28, 29.

unloosing of great punitive agencies. The result of the loosing and the purpose of the loosing is that they may kill the third part of men. There is a progress in the severity of the judgment. In the fourth seal one-fourth of men were killed, here one-third. In the fifth trumpet the ungodly were tormented, here they are killed. It is sin that makes wars, the terrible wars of ancient times and the equally destructive wars of modern times. It is sin that converts Europe into a vast camp of armed men, over two millions in number. It is sin that creates civil wars, feuds, strifes. It is sin, in the form of selfishness, that creates famines. In many and varied ways, with the irresistible might of an Assyrian host war, famines, pestilences, run riot in the world. In every age, among every people, the sixth trumpet, in some form, may be heard sounding out its note of coming disasters. God does not make sin. It is sin because it is utterly against his benevolent will and plain command. But being sin, God makes sin itself bring its own penalty upon itself. God cannot be at peace with unholiness. These trumpets are God's protests in the life that now is, against sin and sinners.

16. In the fifth trumpet God's instruments of destruction were the locusts with preternatural features. God's armies are here marshaled as the means of the wholesale destruction. It is as if from beyond the great river the mysterious and awe-inspiring cavalry were to come. The number is immense, **two hundred thousand thousand**, rather, *twice ten thousand times ten thousand*. The seer did not see this countless host, two hundred million, **I heard the number**. The meaning is, it is as impossible for men to defeat God's purpose of punishing as it would be to resist a force so far passing human computation. At the

appointed time, and with unopposable might, God will visit the ungodly. The immense number here spoken of is a proof that the seer does not intend that we are to find anywhere on the pages of history the exact counterpart of this vision. At a time when the population of the earth did not number over five hundred million people, the numbers in this host are placed at two hundred millions. What he plainly means to teach by these immense numbers is that the agencies at God's command to break down opposition to his kingdom, and to build up righteousness on the earth, pass all human thought. What could Judah, insignificant in size and power, do to withstand a host such as this? What can any ungodly man, custom, or nation, do to withstand God's power when he arises in his might? If God be against us who can be for us?

17. The horses and horsemen are minutely described, though far more attention is called to the horses than to their riders. The riders have breastplates *of fire, of jacinth, rather, of hyacinth, and of brimstone*. His meaning is that the breastplates resembled these objects, so that they were not simply a defensive armor, but were fitted to inspire alarm in the minds of the beholders. The hyacinth stone has a dark blue color, resembling burning brimstone. It is noticeable that the colors on the breastplates correspond to the colors of the emanations from the mouths of the horses. Nothing more terrible could be conceived of by a people not naturally warlike, than a countless host of horses emitting terrors from their mouths. They are not infernal in their origin, like the locusts, but are plainly unnatural and monstrous creatures of the imagination. The horse was itself an object of terror to the Jew; its use was forbidden by law, as it savored of war

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. 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,

heads of the horses are as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths go forth fire, and smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which went forth out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads, and with them they hurt. And the rest of men, who were not killed in these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship

*y Isa. 9:15. z 9:20; Deut. 31:29; 2 Chron. 28:22; Prov. 27:22; Jer. 5:3; 8:6.*

and conquest. The horses, in vision, were fierce, having heads **as the heads of lions.** The countless number, the savage nature, the emitted terrors combine to make a fearful object to contemplate. It is a description worthy of being called a second woe trumpet (ver. 12). No such armies had ever been seen among men. All this is of the drapery of the vision, serving to emphasize the one teaching that universal misery will come upon the world, just such a misery as would result from the invasion of such an army as is here described.

**18.** Here is given the effect of the plagues that come from their mouths. **By . . . brimstone,** rather, *By these three plagues was the third part of men killed by the fire, and the smoke and the brimstone.* The number three has a large place in the structure of this book; the three series of visions, the three woes, the three plagues, the one-third of men killed. This scourge of unnatural cavalry covers the world in its visitation. The imagery is couched in terms that would fill the mind of an Oriental with alarm, but the meaning is for all the ages expressive of the woes to come upon and among the world of the ungodly.

**19.** The seer resumes his description of the horses, adding other features that show their destructive power. They have a power entirely beyond and unlike that of the most savage horses on earth. These horses have power in their tails. **For . . . tails,** rather, *For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails.* Three characteristic features are given of their tails; they are like **serpents**, long, shining, repulsive; they have **heads**,

instead of the unthinking hair; there is life, intelligence, hate centered in living heads with their eye of fascination and their tongue with its poison; **they hurt**, with their stings. It is noticeable that almost no stress is laid upon the horsemen, their countless numbers, their skill or ferocity; attention is devoted to the horses so unlike the horses of the earth. With the mouth the horse kills, with its tail it hurts. The cavalry of earth might rush upon and trample down the foe. These horses, in vision, are such as might be seen in dreams or conceived of in imagination. They are such horses as God can make use of to carry on his wars and break down all opposition. It is hard to fight against God (Acts 5:39).

**20, 21. THE IMPENITENT WORLD.** We have had, in vision, a fearful scourge of the entire world. No description given by men could surpass the horrors of these two woe plagues. The hurts experienced, the resultant deaths, ought to bring the confessing world to a holier life, and the impenitent world to an instant and complete repentance. The effect is seen to be otherwise.

**20. And the rest . . . repented not.** How deep must that guilt be, how obdurate that heart that will not be moved by such appalling disasters. The **men** spoken of are evidently the ungodly part of the earth, those not sealed (ver. 4). As Pharaoh grew harder in heart under the plagues, so these men are modern Pharaohs. They are described as idolaters worshiping the **works of their hands.** But we may not limit the meaning to actual idolaters, who are comparatively few

that they should not worship <sup>a</sup> devils, <sup>b</sup> 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, <sup>c</sup> nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

demons, and idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood, which can neither see, nor hear, 21 nor walk; and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

*a* Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Tim. 4:1.

*b* Ps. 115:4-8; 135:15; Dan. 5:23.

*c* 22:15.

on the earth. The seer is speaking of prevalent sins under Old Testament forms. Spiritual idolatry and spiritual fornication are more dangerous because more insidious and less noticeable than open and outward idolatry. John teaches that idolatry may prevail even in a refined civilization (1 John 5:21). Idolatry is a far wider term than the worship of material idols. Here, as 1 Cor. 10:20, the seer speaks of a perverted worship as under a special influence of demons, evil spirits, who seduce and blind the hearts of men. Of necessity idolatry is folly, for idols are simply things. Infidelity, agnosticism, materialism, worldly-mindedness, are equally foolish when contrasted with the supreme truth of Christianity.

**21.** Four distinct species of wickedness they did not repent of, all of them of a sensual and outbreaking kind. These four sins were typical sins, especially foreign to the Jewish teaching, condemned by the Old Testament prophets. Here they stand for all sins by which the heart is hardened and penalty drawn down. **Sorceries** means witchcraft, through the use of drugs. This form of sin is scarcely known in the world. But all sins, in their inner nature, are one. It is implied here that there is a twofold spirit in punishment; the deserved penalty of guilt whereby wickedness is punished because it is wickedness and ought to be punished; also the merciful purpose whereby the punishment ought to effect a reformation in character, a repentance for sin. Under these woe trumpets the guilt deepens as the penalty grows more severe. The heart does not become contrite, but becomes more fixed in sin. Punishment does not in and through itself work out a changed heart. If it does not produce penitence it will, of necessity, produce obduracy, bitterness, and re-

bellion. It is a mistake to think that future punishment or eternal punishment would produce a penitent heart. It might, as here, work out an ever-growing hardness and fixedness of character. The reproof that softened a Moses hardened a Pharaoh. This passage gives an insight into the workings of the heart. What naturally ought to result in a repentance and earnest service of God produces, under the sinfulness of the human nature, the very reverse. For this result man alone is to blame. It is his heart that produces this ugly result. God's procedure tended, naturally, to a saved life; man's procedure took God's workings and made a moral death out of them. There is no power in outward agencies of judgments and mercies to change a fixed bad heart. In the presence of the plagues, that ought to have convinced the reason, it is stated seventeen times that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. After the raising of Lazarus the Jews plotted to kill him, that he might not be a constant incentive to men to follow Jesus. Jesus plainly taught that miracles alone have no power to soften the heart or change the will (Luke 16:31). "Primitive Christianity was a protest not only against polytheism, but against the moral condition of the pagan world. The seer voices this protest, and enforces it with a terrific description of the vengeance which threatened the world unless it should repent" (SWETE). (Comp. Eph. 5:5, 6.)

**NOTE 1. THE MEANING OF EU-PHRATES.** The Old Testament prophets give the key to the interpretation of this term. It ought never to be construed literally, but must have its recognized prophetic meaning. As an actual river it was the source of the supply and the wealth of Babylon, becoming therefore a sym-

bol of that city and empire. Isaiah, in 8 : 5-8, contrasts Judah under the figure of the little brook Shiloah with the rising power of Babylon symbolized by its mighty river, "the waters of the river strong and many." Jeremiah, while living in Jerusalem, by symbolic act hid a girdle by the river Euphrates, indicating thereby the peril that would come to the covenant people from the heathen power of Babylon (13 : 4). When Babylon was doomed, that destruction was portrayed by representing the river Euphrates as being dried up (*Jer. 50 : 30; Zech. 10 : 11*). The prophet meant no literal river, he used the term in a symbolic way. John sees a mighty city of Babylon, implying no real city (18 : 2), but a mystical city, a great and organized power opposing the kingdom of God. Such a mystical city must be situated on a mystical river Euphrates. In this book we have nothing to do with any literal Babylon or Euphrates. We cannot therefore think of Turkey as a political power occupying the country bounding that river; we cannot think of Mohammedanism as finding its home in that part of the world, nor of the peoples living beyond it, the vast hordes of China, as endangering the civilization of the Christian world. In 17 : 15 John explains the waters on which the unclean woman Babylon sits as meaning peoples and nations, tongues. In 17 : 16 these waters, these peoples, turn against the unclean woman. Fairbairn says: "In short it is the devil's agents turned by the judgment of heaven against the devil's own interest; a beastlike instrument full of rapacity and violence, Satanic guile and wickedness, assailing and subverting that which, though chiefly of Satan, had still too many elements in it of a better kind to suit the taste of the more outrageous and heaven-daring spirit that was to characterize the last times. It comprehends therefore the ultimate proceedings of the beast and the false prophet spoken of in 17 : 2, 11." Swete thinks "the idea presented by the angels of vengeance bound on the banks of the Euphrates, is that the day of vengeance was held back only till God's time has come. When at length they are loosed, the flood will burst its barriers, and ruin will follow."

#### NOTE 2. THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPETS.

1. The wide distinction between the first four trumpets and the final three, in which were found the fifth and sixth, has already been noticed. All the judgments spring from the foundation of moral evil that underlies all the judgments and calls for them. In the second group is a decided advance in the severity of the judgments, an intensification of intellectual darkness and moral corruption, a recognized Satanic element also. Everything is preternatural in the method of punishing, in the locusts and horses.

2. The judgments in the trumpets are entirely or mainly upon the ungodly. The sealed are exempt from direct judgments, though they may suffer indirectly as bound up with them in one social system. The judgment upon an apostate church is revealed in the next series of visions, the bowls. Roughly speaking the seals embrace the history of redemption, the opposition to it, its final conquest. The trumpets reveal God's judgments upon a wicked world opposing Christ. The bowls show God's treatment of an apostate and faithless church.

3. There is in the fifth trumpet a distinct Satanic agency, a mingling of the beastly and the human, of the savage and the feminine. It is the representation of Satanic emissaries who, with high pretensions and king-like authority, with winning gentleness and bold effrontery, teach the doctrines of demons, leading men into strong delusions that they may believe a lie, darkening the intellect and corrupting the moral nature. Fairbairn, and many, find a forcible illustration of this vision in the dark ages that overspread Europe. Satan is always at work to defeat Christ's cause on the earth, but there are times of special Satanic earnestness.

4. No attempt is made to find a distinct meaning for each term in the judgments mentioned—the grass, the trees, the fountains, the sea. It is doubtful if the seer had anything specific in mind other than giving an intensive account of the varied judgments that would touch everything that surrounded and pertained to human life. As symbols of an ever-abiding contest

between sin and righteousness, they are most impressive. Coincidences may be found in every age between the symbols and historic incidents, but this is vastly different from finding them prophecies of distinct events.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Satan and his followers are now permitted to tempt the righteous man, as Peter (Luke 22:31). The time will come when, through the perfected life, his temptations will have no power. He will also himself be restrained. There is a key to the pit of the abyss, and Jesus, the Saviour, will hold that key (ver. 1).

2. The agents of Satan are always hurtful and harmful. God can make use of the creatures of earth to work out his will. Satan can also serve God's purpose in acting as the punisher of sin. His motive in his acting is to do evil, not to do good or to help God (ver. 2).

3. Sometimes there can be no dividing line drawn by men between the godly and the ungodly, so that the hearts of the pious are confused (Ps. 73). But when God sends special judgments on the world he discriminates between those who are his and those who are not. Jesus as judge will do so at the last day (ver. 4; Matt. 25:31-46).

4. The seal upon the saved is not wealth, social standing, or human approval, but the heart that loves God, the life of piety, the pure soul. If perils come there will be special upholding grace (2 Cor. 12:9). No pious life escapes the all-seeing eye (ver. 4).

5. Torments come from sin, temptations from Satan, testings from God. The worst torments of the ungodly are internal, not physical. The darkened mind, the accusing conscience, the embittered life, the separation from God, the alienation from others, the fears concerning the beyond, these are real torments (ver. 5).

6. The good man is ready to die, but anxious to live that he may glorify God and bless others (Phil. 1:23). The ungodly man, while unprepared for dying, yet may find life so bitter that he may wish for death, but it comes not. There is a living death both here and hereafter (ver. 6).

7. Satan's emissaries have a union of intelligence, boldness, wisdom, and allurement that makes them dangerous. Satan is full of devices (2 Cor. 2:11). But his seeming wisdom is a real unwisdom (ver. 7-9).

8. There is, at the last, a sting to Satan's work. His creatures may look like locusts, but they are far worse, they are scorpions. The wine cup that promises much, at the last stings like an adder (Prov. 23:32). Sin is always, at the end, a mockery, a delusion. It must be so, for Satan is a liar (ver. 10; 1 John 2:4).

9. Satan is an Apollyon. He never appears as such, but always as an alluring and seducing tempter. The one who follows him must, in the end, be utterly lost to the real ends of life (ver. 11).

10. It is not unreasonable to think that as God has made a heaven for the clean soul, so he has made a place for the unclean in heart. This place, its existence and nature, was revealed indistinctly in the Old Testament, but plainly in the New Testament. No one will go into this forbidding place without being distinctly warned. Jesus speaks as plainly of hell as he does of heaven (ver. 11).

11. In human history are woes as well as blessings. Jesus, who had a tender heart, denounced woes upon the ungodly (Matt. 23). Sin is the parent of woe (ver. 12).

12. Answers to prayer may be long delayed, but they are ever before God. Prayer is as real a power as steam or electricity, but in a different sphere (ver. 13).

13. When nations are ripe for punishment, the instruments of God's anger, before restrained, are let loose upon them. God is not a God far-distant from the affairs of men. He has present blessings and present distresses under his control. He would rather bless than curse (ver. 14).

14. God has appointed times for doing his work. He never makes mistakes in sending special judgments. He does not hasten in his work, for all the ages are his. Jesus came in the fulness of time (Gal. 4:4). The Canaanites were destroyed when their iniquities were full (ver. 15; Gen. 15:16).

15. God has countless hosts of angels to

do his will. Jesus had more than twelve legions at his command (ver. 16; Matt. 26 : 53).

16. It is hard to bring an impenitent man to repentance. The loving favor of God, the Holy Spirit, the presence of God's judgments may fail to turn a man to Christ (ver. 20).

17. Repentance is an essential condition of forgiveness and salvation. Impenitence is a damning sin (ver. 21).

**CONSOLATORY VISIONS IN THE SERIES OF THE TRUMPETS, 10, 11 : 1-14.** Between the sixth and seventh seals was a consolatory episode with its two visions of a like nature, coming like a day of sunshine in a period of storm. There was given the assurance that amid all the judgments upon the world the church would be kept in safety, and a countless number of the redeemed would be gathered together. The cause of Christ upon the earth would not be a failure. If chastisements should come they would be changed into blessings. In like manner here also we have an episode that is explanatory and consolatory in its nature.

We have as consolatory these thoughts: (1) The time of expectancy, of witnessing, of suffering by the church will not be extended indefinitely; the suffering church will be changed into the glorified church. There will come an end, time will be no longer in the sense of delay (ver. 6). God's delays are oftentimes occasions of confusion and disturbance to our moral natures (Ps. 73). Time will, at last, bring completeness to God's plans and the glorious end will be reached. (2) It is declared that God has purposes planned for the world, far-reaching, embracing all things, announced by the prophets, so that nothing can overtake God as a surprise. His good purposes will ripen in time, and all will see the unfolding of his thought (ver. 7). (3) There is an element of good tidings to be announced (ver. 7 Revised version). This can be nothing else than the complete breaking down of all opposition, and the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom on the earth, the triumph of righteousness. To those in sympathy with God in his work

this triumph will be an occasion of rejoicing. (4) The change of a faithful church into a church largely faithless, as evinced in chapter 11, would be most disheartening to the faithful element; it might beget the feeling that a wicked world and a disloyal church would make it impossible for Christ's cause to succeed. Here is the assurance that the faithful part of the church would ultimately conquer and be crowned. The course of the church in the world is not always that of a flock safely folded, feeding in green pastures, but oftentimes a church in the storm and stress of conflict, sorely pressed, assailed from without and within. But when such times come, when they come to-day to a limited extent and in limited areas, even then is the assurance that the almost crushed church shall be the completely blessed and glorified church. If the time shall come in the near or distant future when the church shall be represented as in 11 : 7, when the prophetic spirit shall be almost quenched, there will yet be a resurrection and an ascension in the sight of all the world. As there was a resurrection of the dead Christ, so in like manner there will always be a resurrection for the cause and truth of the living Christ. The episode in chapter 6 presents the church as safely folded in the midst of persecutions. The episode here presents on the one side a wicked world, a beastlike power, a faithless element in the church; on the other side an all-controlling purpose of God, long announced through prophets, a plan carried out through a witnessing church, a struggle long and severe, but issuing in the final triumph of the witnessing church, expressed in a symbolic way by the ascension to heaven and the seat on the throne. The symbols are prophecies for dark and struggling times that God's care and power are on the side of his people. We are not to infer that these periods and these triumphs are for the times alone that lie at the close of this era, they belong in part to all the ages. If times are dark, if there are declensions from the faith, it will be a cause for rejoicing that God has a seventh angel to sound ushering in a period of conquest and blessing. The entire episode is one of encouragement to the church.

*The seven trumpets—Proclamation by an angel; seven thunders; the little scroll.*

**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: and he had in his hand a little

*d 7 : 2.*      *e 1 : 7; Ps. 97 : 2; Dan. 7 : 13.*      *f 4 : 3; Ezek. 1 : 28.*  
*g 1 : 16; Matt. 17 : 2.*      *h 1 : 15; Dan. 10 : 6.*

## CHAPTER X.

**THE VISION OF THE LITTLE BOOK.**  
If there were no break in the development of the thought we would naturally look at once for the third woe trumpet, the seventh in the series. But a restful period now comes into view between the two woes past and the one yet to come. As there were two visions, consolatory in their nature, between the sixth and seventh seals, in like manner are two explanatory visions between the sixth and seventh trumpets. They are here in answer to questions that naturally arise in the mind. We have been in the midst of blast after blast of God's judgments upon the world of the wicked. They have grown in intensity as they proceeded. During all these centuries as they roll by, is there no church of Christ upon the earth, no good agency, nothing for God to bless? If there is a church is it doing nothing? There has been one intimation in the series that there are faithful people on the earth, people who are kept safe by God's power (9 : 4). In this vision there is revealed plainly the existence and work of Christ's people, witnessing for the unseen Christ, the ruler of his people and the vanquisher of his foes. We have here revealed the agency by which Christ, through the church, effects the ultimately triumphant work of bringing in his supremacy (11 : 15).

In this chapter we have an angel, sublime in appearance, having a little book in his open hand, announcing in a loud voice that no more delay will ensue (ver. 1-7); we behold John taking the book and eating it, tasting sweet at first, then bitter (ver. 8-11).

### 1-7. THE ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK.

1. John's position here is on the earth, he sees another mighty angel,

**10** AND I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow was on his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he

rather, *strong, coming down from heaven*, rather, *out of*. The scene shifts from heaven to earth, but all are parts of one common and progressive vision. *Another.* In reference to whom? to the strong angel spoken of in 5 : 2 or to the various angels with whom we have met? It is altogether probable that this angel is contrasted with the many angelic representations that have met us (9 : 15). Five specifications are given concerning this strong angel. (1) He is a holy being, carrying out God's will, *out of heaven* where God reigns and dwells. Heaven stands for holiness. (2) He is *clothed with a cloud*. The cloud is almost always an accompaniment of Jesus. In his ascension a cloud hid him from the eyes of men (Acts 1 : 9). He announced his coming again on the clouds (Matt. 24 : 30). In this book in four places the cloud is mentioned in connection with the appearance of Jesus (1 : 7; 14 : 14, 15, 16). (3) *A rainbow upon his head*, rather, *the rainbow*. The rainbow was, at the first, God's promise that no further flood should come upon the earth; it was a covenant of mercy (Gen. 9 : 13). Here the reference is to that rainbow that encircles the throne of God (4 : 3), a sign of the mercy that dwells with God, overarching his throne. He is a God of mercy as well as justice. He delights more in forgiveness than in his omnipotence. It is especially significant here when contrasted with the six trumpet sounds that have revealed so plainly God's holy power. (4) *His face . . . sun*, rather, *his face was as the sun*. About his person was a majesty and sublimity that no one could look upon with uncovered eyes. His face blinds the onlooker. The same statement is made in 1 : 6 concerning the glorified Jesus. (5) *Feet as pillars of fire*. (Comp. 1 : 5.) This term is significant of judg-

book open: <sup>i</sup> and he set his right foot upon the sea, and *his left foot* on the <sup>3</sup> earth, and cried with a loud voice, <sup>k</sup> as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, <sup>l</sup> seven thunders uttered their

had in his hand a little book opened. And he set his right foot on the sea, <sup>3</sup> and his left on the land; and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars; and when he cried, the seven thunders

<sup>i</sup> Ps. 2:8; 89:25; Matt. 28:18.

<sup>k</sup> Jer. 25:30; Amos 3:8.

<sup>l</sup> 8:5.

ments, of treading down the adversary. It is also a comforting expression for the believer because it assures him that he has a mighty deliverer in Christ.

To the question, Who is this angel? various answers have been given. Some make the angel a created being, others the Lord Jesus himself, others a representative of the work of Jesus. The many correspondences to the vision of Jesus in chap. 1, the shining face, the fiery feet, the rainbow, the cloud associated with the divine Being, bear witness that the angel is the Lord Jesus himself. It is urged, on the other hand, that the term angel is never applied to the Lord himself in the New Testament, he is above all the angels. It is better, therefore, to regard the angel as a representative form, symbolizing the person and work of the Lord. As in so many passages in this book, the angel of anything is simply the essence of the thing represented. The angel representing the Lord Jesus has fittingly the attributes belonging to him in his august person, and in his wide extending work. He represents his covenant love in the rainbow; his power in the sun shining in his strength; his righteousness in the fiery feet treading down the adversaries. Swete takes "an angel" in the technical sense here and throughout the book.

2. In his left hand was a little book open. In the vision in chapter V on the right hand of the Father was a book sealed securely with seven seals. Here, by way of contrast, there is in the left hand, not in the right; in the hand, not on it; a little book opened, not sealed. What is meant by the little book? The entire vision is based upon that found in Ezekiel, chapters II, III. This is a reproduction of that. Whatever that vision means, we may naturally infer that this is, in essence, like that. That was a message sent to a rebellious people, a book full of lamentations, mourning, woe; a message from God to the people of his day. Ezekiel

was given a roll; it was eaten by him, it was pleasant to the taste, it became bitter subsequently. This book is written in the Hebrew mold, giving New Testament teachings in Old Testament forms. There is no doubt as to the meaning of Ezekiel's vision. John must be interpreted in the light of Ezekiel. The judgments of the first six trumpets could not reform and transform the world. The agency is now revealed in this little book, by which alone the work can be effected. We are not to regard this vision and spoken parable as teaching that the gospel now, for the first time, begins to work among men. The vision is retrospective in character, covering the entire Christian era, revealing now for the first time, in this series, the agencies at work for Christ in the world. This agency is now revealed for two reasons, to explain the method by which the result at which Christ aims can be brought about, and to give comfort to the people of God who might be oppressed with the thought that God works in vain in the world. The might and supremacy of the angel are shown in his attitude, standing **upon the sea and . . . earth**. He, in symbol, makes claim to headship over all things. As Jesus walked on the water (Matt. 14:25), so here one foot is placed on the water. This is in harmony with and explanatory of the term, strong angel. All the world is God's by creation; Christ's by redemption. It must yet own this supremacy (Pha. 2:11). It may also be declared, by his attitude, that his words concern all the earth, a world-wide message.

3. **And cried . . . roareth**, with a great voice, as if the entire earth might hear. It is not represented as a distinct, articulate sound, but the impression is made upon the mind that something fearful in its nature is about to be unfolded. **Seven thunders**, rather, *the seven thunders*, meaning the well-known thunders. There are seven spirits of God, meaning thereby the

**4** voices. 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, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, P 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,

**4** uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; and I heard a voice out of heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders spoke, and 5 write them not. And the angel, whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land, lifted up his right hand to 6 heaven, and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things

*m* Dent. 29 : 29; Dan. 8 : 26; 12 : 4, 9.

*n* Dan. 12 : 4-13.

*o* Gen. 14 : 22; Exod. 6 : 8; Dan. 12 : 7.

*p* 4 : 9-11; 14 : 7; Nch. 9 : 6.

perfect spirit or knowledge. The seven thunders do not mean seven separate and distinct thunders which John hears, but stand for the complete majestic utterance of God's voice. Thunder stands for alarm, the storm awakening the fear of the heart. The voice of thunder marks separate epochs in history, as in the seventh seal (8 : 15); the seventh trumpet (11 : 19); the seventh bowl (chap. 16, 17, 18). God knows how to thunder, to be indignant, to threaten, to punish, to overwhelm. He can send the deluge, he can care for a widow in her distress (*1 Kings 17*). These thunders were a distinct, real utterance, issuing perhaps from that cloud surrounding the angel, heard and understood by John. The seven thunders utter their voice, apparently, in response to the mighty cry of the strong angel.

**4.** What was uttered in the voice of thunder was intelligible to John. Obedient to the command in 1 : 11 he was about to write it down. He is forbidden to write the things heard. **Seal . . . and write them not.** In like manner Daniel is forbidden to write what he had heard (*Dan. 12 : 4*). Why did God speak at all? He must have wished to inform John of his purposes thus uttered, for his own counsel, encouragement, and enlightenment. He planned to conceal the things uttered from the people at large. Some things God keeps in his own power (*Acts 1 : 7*). It is useless to speculate on what was uttered. It is irreverent to intrude when God has shut the door upon our knowledge. Some interpreters have thought the seven thunders referred to seven king-

doms that embraced the teachings of the Reformation; others that they refer to the seven-hilled city—Rome—that uttered the decrees of excommunication against Luther; others to the seven crusades in the Middle Ages. These interpretations are foolish. Jesus, at his departure, had many teachings to give, but his disciples were not fitted to receive them (*John 16 : 12*). These voices may have been the utterance of judgments so severe and overwhelming that their unfolding to others might have overcome the hearts of the godly and ungodly alike. As a symbolic act, the forbidding to write is in itself a very impressive event. New and great changes are about to be ushered in. Great judgments have come, great manifestations of God's power, but God can do greater things. God is a greater being than he has ever manifested himself to be. We do not know what these suppressed voices are, but the entire earth may stand in fitting expectancy before the unknown future when God may, in ways so unknown, so august, reveal himself. The godly world may see greater displays of the glory of God than have yet been shown. The ungodly world may be utterly prostrated under the fiery feet of the conquering Christ.

**5, 6.** The attitude in taking the oath is to lift the righthand toward heaven, appealing to God's holiness to attest the truthfulness of the statement. (*Comp. Gen. 14 : 22; Dan. 12 : 6, 7*). God can swear by none higher than himself; all other beings lower than God may appeal to him (*Heb. 6 : 16*). The angel, in the most solemn way, makes appeal to heaven. God is described under the

<sup>4</sup>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.

q 16 : 17; Dan. 12 : 7; Hab. 2 : 3.

r 11 : 15-18. s Rom. 11 : 25; Eph. 3 : 9.

t Amos 3 : 7; Luke 24 : 44-47; Acts 3 : 21.

that are therein, that there shall be no longer delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is the mystery of God finished, as he gave the joyful message to his servants the prophets.

two aspects of his eternity, dwelling in the midst of the endless ages, and his all-powerfulness, the Creator of all things. **Time no longer.** *Time* has here the meaning of *delay*, as given in the Standard and Bible Union versions. "There shall no more be any interval of time, any further delay: cf. Hab. 2 : 3; Heb. 10 : 37" (SWETE). Much is about to take place before the absolute end comes. In 6 : 11 the martyred souls are bidden to rest for a time until the persecutions sweep over them. Their impatience is restrained by the assurance that, in due time, God's holiness would manifest itself in penalty and in preservation. God is not man that he should break his word, or forget his promise, or be impotent to fulfil his purposes. It is the eternal and almighty God who will now fulfil his declarations thus made. Holy men grow impatient, bad men harden their hearts, at the seeming unconcern on God's part, but in due time God will reveal himself. God's delays are always for man's good. They do not mean indifference to moral distinctions among men or weakness in purpose, but have the repentance of men in view (2 Peter 3 : 9).

7. There will be no further delay, but now a rapid unfolding of God's plan, long since foretold. The entire verse appears in the R. V., *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.* In the days of the seventh angel the final stage appears, then God's plans will be fulfilled (chap. 11). When he shall begin to sound, at the beginning of the era thus indicated. **Mystery of God.** The word *mystery* indicates something that would be entirely incomprehensible but for its unfolding by revelation. God has plans from the beginning. These plans become known

as the ages throw light upon them. In the Old Testament were many predictions of the triumph of God's cause and the defeat of God's enemies, the putting down of evil. The good tidings, including the gospel of Christ, the salvation from sin, the preservation of the saints, the triumph of God's kingdom, was made known to and through the prophets. Of the details of this future development of God's kingdom, the prophets were largely ignorant (1 Peter 1 : 12). The term good tidings must be taken in a large sense, for we have here portrayed the judgments upon a wicked world and an apostate church, not simply God's care for his children and church. It is a glad message for his cause, because it shows that he uses all his power in fulfilling his promises for his people. All things are under his feet for the sake of his church (Eph. 1 : 22). We must read 11 : 15-18 in connection with this verse. **Is finished.** This plan of God includes thousands of years in its course and fulfilment. Jesus, in God's mind, was slain from before the foundation of the world (13 : 8); the conflict and triumph of Jesus is announced in Gen. 3 : 15 in terms that in time became luminous. The Son comes into the world in the person of a child (Isa. 9 : 6); he is invested with a world-wide sovereignty (Ps. 2 : 8); as a sufferer he shall redeem men, and shall be satisfied with the outcome of his sufferings (Isa. 53). A satisfied Saviour, a rejoicing church, a defeated Satan, a redeemed earth, the kingdom of Christ victorious, these are parts of the good tidings. The mystery of God is spoken of by the angel holding the little book in his hand. The Old and New Testaments are both of one plan, presenting a beginning, a course of fulfilment, and a final consummation. Christianity is no afterthought of God, but is, from the beginning, a part of his plan. History presents instances of thirty years of

8 And <sup>u</sup>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.

*u* Ver. 4.

*x* Jer. 15 : 16; Ezek. 2 : 8; 3 : 1-3.

8 And the voice which I heard out of heaven [I heard] again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel, who stands on the sea and on the land. 9 And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, Take and eat it up; and it will make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it will be sweet as honey.

war waged for the preservation of the national life. Our God is not a God who can be discouraged or defeated. He keeps his hand on the course of the world's history, in suppressing evil, in developing the good, in preserving his people, in leading his church, in granting the aid of the Holy Spirit, so that in the end there will be a glorious outcome for God's plans. Good men may patiently wait until the mystery of God is finished. Thousands of years passed before Jesus came in person. There may be ages intervening before the end comes, but back of all promises and plans is the person of God.

**8-11. THE LITTLE BOOK TAKEN AND EATEN.** The voice which had spoken to John in ver. 4 again speaks to him. The seer is commanded to take the little book from the hand of the angel. The sealed book was opened by the mighty Son of God; none less than he could open the book or look upon it. This book, on the other hand, is taken by a man. This significant act shows that the message in the book, the commands, the warnings—whatever they may be—are to have a human mediation; they are to become known and effective through a human witnessing ministry. Great purposes are to come to fulfilment through human agencies. The seer stands, not for himself alone, but for the church which he represents. The open book, the words to be spoken, the teachings to be made known, these must be given through men. The little book is the manifested will of God involving mercy and judgment. John must take the book.

**9. John obeys. I went unto the angel.** His position, in vision, is shifted to the earth, holding converse with the angel. He takes the book; he is bidden to eat it. (Comp. Ezek. 3.)

**Eat it.** The contents of the book are to be devoured by him, eaten, thoroughly understood, so that the teachings would become his own. In vision, to eat a book is to become identified with it, so that its truths, its counsels, its warnings, become one's own. In the mouth the book was to be sweet as honey. Every revelation of God ought to be pleasant to the spiritual taste (*Ps. 19 : 10*). Ezekiel found his mission pleasant, because from God; but exceeding bitter because involving the message of disaster. It does not mean that any fleshly natural feelings would be stirred up against God or his proposed dealings. It is a figurative way of saying that the message would be, in one sense, joyous, inasmuch as God would be glorified; in another sense oppressive, inasmuch as many would not accept the message, would incur heavier condemnation. Paul rejoiced because he was a messenger of Christ (*1 Tim. 1 : 12*), but he had continual sorrow of heart on account of his people's rejection of the Saviour (*Rom. 10 : 1*). Jesus delighted in doing God's will, but he wept tears of sorrow over Jerusalem. In some respects the mission would be joyous for John, in other respects it would be grievous.

**10.** This verse describes the effect of eating the roll. It was devoured, its contents were studied, its teachings made known. As foretold, it tasted sweet in the mouth. David speaks of the sweetness of God's words. The after bitterness does not reveal a soul unwilling or rebelling against God's plans. It is a strongly figurative method of declaring that, in some respects, the contents of the book were oppressive and depressing, giving an account of God's message rejected with the consequent heavy woes resulting from this rejection. "Every revela-

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.

10 And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth as sweet honey; and when I had eaten it, my belly was 11 made bitter. And they say to me, Thou must again prophesy of many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

y Ezek. 3 : 8.

z Ezek. 2 : 10.

a 14 : 6; Jer. 1 : 9, 10.

tion of God's purposes, even though a mere fragment, a little book, is 'bitter-sweet,' disclosing judgment as well as mercy" (SWETE). It is a burden to Christ's messengers to preach a message that may be a savor of death unto death (<sup>2</sup> Cor. 2 : 16).

**11. He said unto me,** rather, *they say*. Some refer this to the seven thunders, making the substance of the message to consist of judgments mainly. It is better to regard this as a statement, indefinite in its nature, meaning, "It was said unto me," without indicating by whom. **Prophecy.** This term is not limited to predictions, foretellings. The general New Testament sense is that of speaking for God, giving his messages whatever they be, unfolding his will (<sup>1</sup> Thess. 5 : 20). It is a great mistake to think that prophecy is limited to prediction. There may be a real prophecy without any foretelling of the future. Prediction often occurs, but this is only an incidental feature, it does not belong to the idea of prophecy in itself. The term is used in its large sense here. **Before many peoples.** That is, in the presence of, over, indicating the universal, world-wide character of the ministry. The mission is that of giving the contents of the little book unto all nations, to the uttermost (Matt. 28 : 19). Ezekiel's eating the roll was his inauguration into the prophetic office. Isaiah's sight of the Lord was his entrance on his public work as a prophet of Jehovah (Isa. 6). The eating of the roll, in this vision, indicates a formal introduction into a ministry for Christ. This vision is retrospective and prospective in its nature.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Mercy and judgment are united in Jesus and his revelation. He is tender to the penitent, not desiring that any should

perish. He is, at the same time, holy and just, not willing that guilt should go unpunished (ver. 1).

2. Jesus is the almighty Saviour. He made all things, redeemed all things, will ultimately control all things, so that the universe shall find its head in Christ (Eph. 1 : 10). He expectantly awaits his universal sovereignty (ver. 2, 3; Heb. 10 : 13).

3. Some things are wisely hidden from us. Secret things belong to God, revealed things are for us. What concerns our spiritual state is so plain that no one may misunderstand. Nothing is revealed simply to gratify curiosity (ver. 4).

4. It is a comfort to know that the almighty and everlasting God is pledged to stand by his people and his promise. Anything less than such a God might fail in his purpose or be overcome (ver. 5).

5. We must not mistake God's delay for indifference. His delays are trying to faith and patience, and provocative of disbelief. But we may be assured that God is faithful, and has a book of remembrance (Mal. 3 : 16). He is a God of patience that the wicked may thereby be led to repentance, and that his people may be led to trust him (ver. 6).

6. We would naturally expect God to have many thoughts too large for his people to comprehend now. His hidden plans he reveals so far as his people are able to bear them. Many things hidden from the prophets are made known to us (Matt. 13 : 17). What we do not know now will be made manifest in time, if it is needful for us to know (ver. 7; John 13 : 7).

7. God, in time, will hasten the fulfilment of his plans so that the kingdom may spread rapidly, and wickedness rapidly break down. God knows all the future, and he is great, wise, and strong

*The temple measured; the two witnesses.*

**11** AND there was given me <sup>b</sup>a reed like unto a rod: and <sup>c</sup>the angel stood, saying, <sup>d</sup>Rise, and measure <sup>e</sup>the temple of

**11** AND there was given me a reed, like a staff, saying, Rise, and measure the

<sup>b</sup> 21 : 15; Ezek. 40 : 3, etc.; Zech. 2 : 1, 2.

<sup>c</sup> 10 : 1-5.

<sup>d</sup> Num. 23 : 18.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. 6 : 16; 1 Peter 2 : 5.

enough to care for his own, and overcome all opposition (ver. 7).

8. Salvation is from God. Jesus is the Mediator and procuring cause of salvation. The Holy Spirit is God's worker within us, interpreting us to ourselves and Christ to us (ver. 8).

9. Every saved person is saved to serve. He must strive to know God's will that he may give it to others. "Here am I, send me," is the Christian's right attitude. New Testament principles incorporated in a holy and useful life will transform the world (ver. 9).

10. No minister or teacher can become an effective messenger to others until he has made God's revelation his own. The gospel must become a part of his own experience. The heart must feel, as well as the ear hear, God's revelation (ver. 10).

11. The prophets prophesied to a disobedient people. One concerned for others will find a joy in work, but will have a heaviness of heart (ver. 10; Rom. 10 : 1).

12. It is God's desire that all nations should know his will. It is a sinful negligence to withhold from any people the knowledge of Jesus (ver. 11).

## CHAPTER XI.

**THE TWO WITNESSES. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.** We have now a second interposed vision. According to the general structure of the book the vision must accord in nature with the preceding vision. The idea of witnessing is the prominent thought, together with the assured approval of God and his interposition in behalf of the witnessing church. The vision is one of the most highly figurative in the entire book, exceedingly dramatic in character. Seen in vision, as it is, it must be interpreted, not as history, not in a literal sense, but as figurative, symbolic. To treat it as history will be to introduce something out of harmony

with the spirit and structure of the entire book.

In this chapter we see the temple measured, the introduction of two witnesses clothed in sackcloth, having power with God and men, oppressed and killed. God gives them a glorious resurrection, and sends judgments upon the ungodly (ver. 1-14); at the sounding of the seventh trumpet Jesus has a universal sovereignty; the redeemed church sings a hymn of praise, and has intimate fellowship with God (ver. 15-19).

**1-14. THE TWO WITNESSES.** We have, preparatory to the introduction of the two witnesses, an explanatory and introductory statement. The description of the temple and its worshipers furnishes a reason for the subsequent witnessing. The temple and its worshipers measured, in the two opening verses.

**1. Given . . . rod.** It is not stated by whom the rod is given to him. Inasmuch as the term, "my," occurs in ver. 3, denoting an ownership of the witnesses, it is fair to infer that it is the angel representing the Lord himself that is introduced here. The **reed** is for measuring purposes. The foundation for this figure is found in Zech. 2 : 1, 2 and Ezek. 40 : 3. In these cases the sacred buildings and city were measured, to indicate their majesty, grandeur, and permanence. (Compare the measuring of the New Jerusalem, 21 : 15.) It was a mark of God's favor, an indication and prophecy of preservation and permanency, not of destruction. Peace and safety, with God's blessing, were assured to those dwelling within the limits thus measured. They were marked out that thereby, humanly speaking, God might the more effectively preserve them. **Angel stood, saying,** rather, **one said.** **Rise** does not mean that he must rise from a sitting position, but it is a command to begin the work in hand. Three things are to be meas-

God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But <sup>f</sup>the court which is without the temple leave out, and

temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship therein. And the court which is without the temple

*f* Ezek. 40 : 17, 20.

ured: (1) **The temple of God.** The reference here is not to the temple buildings as a whole, embracing the rooms surrounding the temple and the various enclosures, but to the innermost part, especially the holy of holies. This was the most sacred part containing the ark, the mercy seat, and the cloud of glory where God revealed himself in an especial manner. The seer is not thinking of the actual temple at Jerusalem as though it were yet actually standing, but of the ideal, symbolic temple in the heavens, of which the tabernacle in the wilderness was the counterpart. In ver. 19 the temple is spoken of as "in heaven," which makes it plain that he is not alluding here to any actually existing temple. The allusion cannot be to any actually existing structure, for the measuring spoken of is a mark of preservation, but the temple at Jerusalem was utterly destroyed in A. D. 70. We must interpret the term, temple, in the light of that fact. (2) **Altar.** This altar is most probably the altar of incense spoken of in 8 : 5, on which the prayers of the saints rested, and in response to which God answered by judgments upon the wicked by interpositions for his cause. (3) **Them that worship.** The measuring of the worshipers must certainly be a figurative expression. An actual measuring is not in harmony with the realities of life. To measure the worshiper is to ascertain the character, its conformity with the divine standard, to give the assurance of acceptance and preservation. It gives, in another form, what has already been asserted in 7 : 3 by the marking upon the forehead. God knows and cares for his own. The figurative use of the term **measure** here, necessitates its figurative interpretation in the other two cases. **Therein** may refer either to the temple, or in a figurative way to the altar, or to both combined as representing the entire ritual worship. The outer and inner rooms with the altar were the means by which worship was

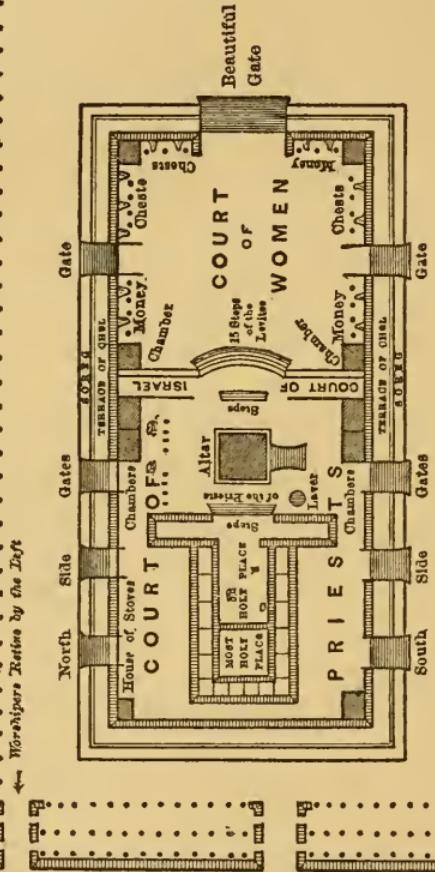
rendered, in an acceptable way, to God. "The seer, however, has in view, not the material sanctuary, but the spiritual building of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 3 : 16 f.; 2 Cor. 6 : 16; Eph. 2 : 21; 2 Thess. 2 : 4). The measuring of the sanctuary provides for its preservation from the general overthrow, and thus corresponds with the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, which preceded the seventh seal opening as the measuring precedes the seventh trumpet blast" (SWETE).

2. A striking contrast is made between the sacred shrine itself and the courts adjoining the temple. All formed parts of one integral whole, all alike were sacred in the temple that stood at Jerusalem. But here, in a symbolic way, the one is measured and marked out for preservation, the other is marked out for destruction. **But, rather, and. The court . . . without the temple.** About the temple were large exterior courts for the priests, for the Jews at large, for the women, with the outermost courts for the Gentiles. The following design will explain the relation of the temple to the outer courts. **Leave out,** rather, *cast out*. The work is a forcible one, implying not only that the outer court is not to be regarded and honored by measuring it, but it is, by some positive act, as it were, cast out, dishonored, thrown aside as unclean. By this symbolic act there is portrayed a vast moral difference between the character of the two, the temple and the surrounding grounds. As the temple and its courts were a picture of God's spiritual dwelling-place on the earth, it is here shown that a part of God's professed people, of God's outward inheritance, is looked upon with favor, and another part with utter disfavor and consequent rejection. It is a declaration, in vision and by parable, that a part of Christ's professed church is faithful to him, destined, therefore, to be graciously preserved, and a part of Christ's professed church is to be discarded, openly thrown aside.

COURT OF THE GENTILES

PLAN OF  
THE SECOND TEMPLE  
OR  
“LATTER HOUSE”

Ophele Gate



BALDOS TO EION

Worshippers Enter → R O Y A L P O R C H

measure it not; <sup>g</sup>for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they <sup>b</sup>tread under foot <sup>i</sup>forty and two months.

*g Ps. 79:1; Luke 21:24; 2 Thess. 2:3-12.*

*i 13:5; Dan. 7:25; 12:7, 11, 12.*

leave out, and measure it not; because it was given to the Gentiles, and they will tread down the holy city forty-two

*h Dan. 7:19; 8:10, 24, 25.*

**Measure it not** shows that that part is to be treated as an unholy thing, destined to suffer indignity and loss. By the *court* is meant a part of the professed people of God, yet degenerate in character, standing to him in a relation different from that maintained by the faithful part represented by the innermost shrine, different also from the relation sustained by the Gentiles or the nations outside. Three kinds of people are spoken of, the faithful part, the unfaithful part, the heathen people on the outside. In 1 Cor. 3:16 the people of Christ are spoken of as a temple of the Lord, dedicated to his service. **It is given unto the Gentiles**, rather, *hath been given*. The *Gentiles*, rather, *nations*, were regarded as spiritually unclean, so that they were not permitted to enter the temple or its most sacred courts. Paul was charged with introducing a Gentile into the sacred enclosure, entrance into which, in an unlawful way, was punishable with death (*Acts 21:29*). In the vision the Gentiles are permitted in judgment to have free entrance into all the temple courts. The nations, those outside the sacred enclosure, are alluded to in the after parts of the book. In 20:8 we see them arrayed against the people of God. The unspiritual part of the church, the outer court, is dominated, trodden under foot by the worldly heathen power; thereby we have a body that is seemingly, in an outward way, a church. This church is composed of the unspiritual element, controlled by an ungodly power, having over it the name of Christ, but not having his life within. This organization, in the after part of this book, is spoken of under the term of the unclean woman, a spiritual Babylon (*17:4, 5*). **The holy city** does not refer to any literal Jerusalem, as that it should be trodden under foot by hostile armies. The allusion is to Jerusalem, but in a metaphorical sense. The city stood as a symbol of God's dwelling-place on the earth;

glorious things were spoken of Zion (*Ps. 87:3*). In time, the city became the home of a large ungodly element. This was the case in the days of Jesus and John. Here it stands as the type of the professing church of Christ, a holy Jerusalem that had become, to a large degree, ungodly. Temple, altar, court, city are all used in a figurative sense. The temple and the altar represent God's spiritual church on the earth; the court, the unspiritual element in the professing body of Christ; the Gentiles, the outer unspiritual world. God will preserve his own; he will reject the unworthy and unclean. We have already had allusions to the introduction and growth of the unchristian element in the churches of Christ. We find them in the letters to the churches (*2:4, 9, 14, 20; 3:2, 15*). The heathen worldly power shall dominate and control the unspiritual church. The time is spoken of as **forty and two months**. This expression is used five times in this book. In 11:2; 13:5 we have the expression "forty and two months"; in 11:3 and 12:6 we have the same time expressed in terms of days, twelve hundred and sixty days; the same period is expressed in terms of years in 12:14, time and times and half a time. These terms cannot be taken in a literal sense. Like all the other terms employed, this period of time must be taken in a figurative sense. (See note at the end of this chapter.) It is a symbol of incompleteness, of persecution, sorrow, tribulation, when God's cause is seemingly prostrate. It is well to get in mind firmly the method of interpretation to be adopted here, whether literal or figurative. It is assumed by some writers, Cowles and others, that the temple is standing at the time of these visions, and this passage is taken as a proof that the book was written prior to the destruction of the temple in A. D. 70. But it would seem that the allusion here is not to any actually existing temple, but to the ideal temple in the

3 And I will give power unto my two | 3 months. And I will give to my two

heavens, of which the tabernacle was the earthly reproduction. The measuring of the worshiper must be understood in a figurative way. In this vision, in ver. 8, the seer expressly declares that the term, Jerusalem, is not to be taken in a literal sense. He guards us against taking the word in a boldly literal way. John intends to assert that the real Israel of God, faithful in life, represented by the temple and altar, will be preserved by God, having upon it God's abiding love and protection. But the outer court shall be cast aside as if excommunicated from God's blessing; it shall be as if trampled under foot by heathen people. By this term, court, he designates the unchristian element in the outwardly professing church, a degenerate and corrupt church, having the name of Christ, but not his life and power. No definite period of time is indicated by the three and a half years in its threefold form. It also is a symbol of the time during which evil shall have great power, and the people of Christ shall suffer tribulation (*John 16:33*).

The two witnesses are now introduced. We approach another vision that has caused much difficulty to interpreters. We shall find many difficulties vanishing if we hold fast to the principle that we are moving among symbolic representations, not among actual historical statements. In 10:11 it had been stated that a witnessing should take place among all nations and peoples. Here we have presented the witnessing itself in its method, the opposition met with, its effectiveness, its seeming temporary defeat, its approval by God, and its triumph shown in a most striking way. The function of the church is to be that of witnessing; it is only in this way that God can secure his rightful sway among men. God will always have a faithful people in the world, even if ungodliness abounds and the love of many waxes cold. Sometimes he has more people on his side than even the faithful estimate (*1 Kings 18:19*). Five distinct divisions are marked out in the treatment of this topic: their testimony (ver. 8-6); their death (ver.

7-10); their resurrection (ver. 11); their ascension (ver. 12); and the effect on the beholders (ver. 13, 14).

**3. I will give...two witnesses,** rather, *I will give unto my two witnesses*. It is the heavenly voice still speaking, the strong angel most likely, representing Jesus Christ. It can scarcely be Christ himself, for in ver. 8 the voice says, *their Lord*, alluding to Christ. The witnesses are in reality Christ's, just as the church belongs to Christ (*Matt. 16:18*). Christ is the founder of the church, he is its head and ruler, he owns its ordinances, he constantly supplies strength to his people for witnessing. The source of authority and power for the church is Christ. He alone can give life, can direct the course of the church, can define its nature, can give support to it in trial. *Two witnesses*: Are we to understand two literal witnesses, or are they to be understood in a symbolic sense? We are not to understand any two literal witnesses, such as Enoch and Elijah, or Moses and Elijah, or Zerubbabel and Joshua, or any two who are yet to arise in whom, as in representatives, the power of the church shall be concentrated. As these terms must be construed in a figurative way, so must the two witnesses themselves be regarded as figurative expressions. The seer may have in mind two historical persons who witnessed courageously for God, but he passes straightway into figurative expressions regarding two witnesses as the number essential for Old Testament witnessing (*Deut. 17:6*). The two witnesses are the faithful witnessing church which, in times dark and bright, stands fast in its allegiance to God. They are the faithful remnant within the professing church, that flock which, though small in number, listens to the voice of the shepherd (*John 10:4*). The two witnesses represent, therefore, all the faithful human witnesses for and in behalf of Christ. Similarly SWETE: "The witnesses represent the church in her function of witness-bearing (*Acts 1:8*) and her testimony is symbolized by *two* witnesses partly in reference to the well known law of *Deut. 19:15*. . . . The witness of the church, borne

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.

*j* 12 : 6.

*k* 1 : 20; Zech. 4 : 2, 3, 11-14.

*l* Isa. 54 : 5.

witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

**4** These are the two olive trees, and the two lampstands, which stand be-

by her martyrs and confessors, her saints and doctors, and by the words and lives of all in whom Christ lives and speaks, is one continued prophecy (comp. 19 : 10) lasting throughout the twelve hundred and sixty days of heathendom.” **P r o p h e s y .** This means speaking in behalf of God, the unfolding of his will for instruction, for warning men. It is something vastly larger than prediction, though this is one province of prophesying. In the New Testament times prophesying formed an essential part of the spiritual and church life (1 Thess. 5 : 20).

**Sackcloth.** The prophets were clothed with a rough cloth of camel’s hair, typifying the rough work they were called upon to do, the sufferings which the witnesses were called upon to endure in delivering the message, expressing also the self-denying life of the prophets. (Compare Elijah and John the Baptist, 2 Kings 1 : 8; Matt. 3 : 4.) It is a figurative term to express the attitude and spirit of the church. The sack-cloth does not indicate that the church is to live a hermit or retired life, apart from men, but it is to be separate from the world, that it may the more effectively bear witness to it. **O n e t h o u s a n d t w o h u n d r e d a n d t h r e e s c o r e d a y s .** This is equivalent to the forty-two months of ver. 2. Why it is put in a different form we may not know. It may be that the change here to days is to indicate in an emphatic way that the prophesying will take place daily, continuously. Here again is a broken period equal to three and a half years, the half of a complete period. The witnessing in sorrow and in troubled times is only for an incomplete period, it will come to an end. It is a matter of doubt whether this period corresponds precisely with the forty-two months in limits of time. It corresponds precisely with the limit assigned to Elijah’s power in shutting up the heavens in Ahab’s reign (Luke 4 : 25). His faithful and personal wit-

nessing may be one of the historical facts that lies at the basis of the imagery here. Seven is the number of the covenant indicating perfection, completeness, peace, and joy. The half of the seven indicates a time of sorrow, of incompleteness, when the promises do not come to a fulfilment; when tribulation and persecution may arise.

**4.** The witnesses are figuratively described as **olive trees and candlesticks**, rather, *lampstands*. The seer reverts to Zechariah for his figure (chap. 4). In the prophecy was a golden candlestick with seven lamps, two olive trees constantly supplying the lamps with oil. In this place we have two candlesticks, varying thus incidentally from the Old Testament vision. In Zechariah the two olive trees were perhaps two literal witnesses, Zerubbabel and Joshua, or Zechariah and Haggai. The meaning here is evident. The witnesses are givers of light; they scatter light everywhere through their teaching. They reveal God’s will, man’s duty, the way of salvation, the penalty of sin, the ultimate triumph of God’s cause. The witnessing is not a simple human witnessing; the witnesses are constantly supported by divine grace and help. The prophet said: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord” (Zech. 4 : 6). Jesus himself is the true and faithful witness (1 : 5). These represent the teaching borne by Christ’s people in all ages everywhere. They witness by teachings begotten by the Holy Spirit. **G o d o f t h e e a r t h ,** rather, *Lord*. Their position before the universal Lord indicates the worldwide witnessing, and also their approval by God. Whether men will hear or forbear, they stand accepted by their Lord, they are his witnesses to men. There will be a constant readiness on their part to do their Lord’s will, their words are not their own (Matt. 10 : 20).

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. 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.

*m* 2 Kings 1 : 10, 12; Jer. 5 : 14; Ezek. 43 : 3; Hosea 6 : 5.  
*n* Num. 16 : 29, 35; Ps. 105 : 15; Isa. 27 : 3; Zech. 2 : 8.

fore the Lord of the earth. And if any one wishes to hurt them, fire goes forth out of their mouth, and devours their enemies; and if any one shall wish to hurt them he must in this manner be killed. These have authority to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have authority over the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they may wish.

*o* 1 Kings 17 : 1. *p* Exod. 7 : 19.

5. In this verse we have an illustration of the power dwelling in the witnessing church. The incidents mentioned are taken from the Old Testament prophets. **If any man will hurt**, rather, *desireth to hurt*. There has been, in all the ages, a mind on the part of the ungodly to suppress the faithful teaching and testimony. Sometimes there has been simply the averted ear; sometimes, as in Stephen's case, the violent death; sometimes the Inquisition, as in Holland and Spain; sometimes persecution, as in the days of Rome, and in recent times in Madagascar and Armenia; sometimes banishment and ostracism. **Fire.** The allusion here is to 2 Kings 1 : 10, 12, where fire devoured the enemies of Elijah. The term, fire, here cannot be taken in a literal sense, but rather with the meaning of the words of Jehovah to Jeremiah: "I will make thee fire and the people wood" (Jer. 5 : 14). In the portrait of Jesus, in the vision 1 : 16, a sharp, two-edged sword proceeds out of his mouth, signifying that his words would be like swords cutting down all enemies. In like manner God would defend his witnessing church, making it effective, breaking down opposition. **Killed.** In Dan. 3 : 22 we have perhaps a foundation for this imagery, the fire from the furnace devouring the ungodly men. There is affirmed here the principle of retribution: in what manner the witnesses are treated, in like manner the enemies of Christ will be treated. This will not be literally true at any particular time in the history of the church; it will be true as a general principle to be made manifest in due time. The element of time must always be taken into consideration when we regard the promises and threatenings of God. The

present tense of the verb is used as indicating that which is a settled principle, even though the event be far in the future. Underneath the imagery of fire and killing is contained the thought that God will make the church effective, will defend it, will cause the witnessing of the church to break down all opposition. He will defend it as though he made use of actual fire and the destruction of life.

6. This verse further describes the power of the witnessing church. **Shut heaven.** Elijah's prayer closed the skies that it rained not for three and a half years (1 Kings 17 : 1; James 5 : 17). It is taught here in a general way, from this one historical illustration, that God's praying people will have power through their prayers. God will turn and overturn in answer to prayers of his suppliant children.

**Blood.** The seer has in mind the plagues in Egypt when Moses turned the waters into blood. This miracle was designed to give a larger confidence to Moses, to show the Israelites the leadership of Moses, to convince and persuade Pharaoh to permit the Israelites to depart. Under Old Testament figures Jesus promised to his faithful church that he will effect deliverance for his people as in the olden times. Jehovah, who cared for Moses and Elijah and Daniel, is the same unchanging God, now manifest in Christ. God works through his providences, making unjust wars, pestilences, civil convulsions work out his righteous ends. He can make even persecutions the means of widening his kingdom. The persecution in Jerusalem scattered the messengers of Christ everywhere. What was meant to kill the kingdom was the means of widening it (Acts 11 : 19). God works

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 over-  
8 come them, and kill them. And their

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and will overcome them, and  
8 will kill them. And their carcase is

<sup>a</sup> Luke 13 : 32; Acts 20 : 24.

r 13 : 1, 11; 17 : 8.

<sup>s</sup> Dan. 7 : 21.

now more through orderly laws than through miracles, but he can and does manifest his care for his church. The Spanish Armada in 1588 would, if successful, have crushed out Protestantism in England. The people of God set apart a day for prayer. A mighty storm struck the fleet and scattered it, and thereby saved the cause of truth in England. At many critical eras in history the attentive reader may see where, seemingly, God has interposed, through natural laws, and saved the truth that it perished not from the earth. Unlimited power seems to be given to the church, **as often as they will.** The promise is no more unlimited than that of Jesus concerning prayer (*John 14 : 14, 15*).

7. We have here the second stage in the history of the two witnesses, their death. **Shall have finished.** Jesus finished his work (*John 17 : 4*). In like manner the church will finish its testimony. The same word for finish is used in 2 Tim. 4 : 7 to describe the conclusion of Paul's testimony by a violent death. The entire period of three and a half years is occupied with bearing testimony. All the time some of the witnesses are completing their testimony, but the church, as a whole, continues to witness. Over against the reigning Christ and the two witnesses is the **beast** here mentioned for the first time. The term signifies a wild beast, animal, ferocious in its nature. It has not been spoken of in this book previously, but the term would be familiar to all readers of the Old Testament. (See Daniel.) It is used here by anticipation, the first appearance of the beast is in 13 : 1. It appears as a large feature of this book in chap. XIII and XVII. It represents the material and visible worldly element that stands constituted and arrayed against the spiritual and invisible forces of Christianity. He rises from the **pit**, the abyss. We have here a sight of the unseen but real Satanic world opposed, in its essence, to the spiritual

kingdom and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus appears in the heavens; that which opposes his work naturally appears, in symbol, from an abyss. In previous places in this book we have had the open attacks of Satan (2 : 10). Jesus has risen from the dead and ascended to a glorified life; Satan, as if by way of utter contrast to Christ, has ascended from the abyss. This word abyss means the pit of darkness, whence Satan and his host come (9 : 2). Three statements are made concerning him: he makes war upon the two witnesses, he overcomes them, he kills them. **Shall make war.** (Comp. Dan. 7 : 21.) **Overcome.** Persecution, violence, social ostracism, may hush the voice of the church. Isaiah may be sawn asunder; Stephen may be martyred; James may be beheaded; the witnesses may be silenced, so that the true Christianity upon the earth may be found only in scattered places, and hidden from men. **Kill.** The church, in its outward expression and activities, may be so completely suppressed as to be seemingly almost extinct. There have been such times in the past. Blackstone relates that early in the reign of George III he went from church to church in London to hear every clergyman of note, and did not hear a single discourse which had more of Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would be impossible for him to discover from what he heard whether the preacher was a follower of Confucius or Mohammed or Christ. Jesus spoke of a decaying piety (Matt. 24 : 12) and of persecutions (*John 16 : 33*). A Christ who could not remain dead will not permit his church, represented by these witnesses, to remain permanently in a seemingly dead condition.

8. This verse strengthens the impression made in ver. 7; not only are they dead, but there is great rejoicing over their death. It seems as though the cause of Christ were utterly doomed and dead. When Jesus died it must

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 10 dead bodies to be put in graves. \* And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, b and shall send gifts one to another; c because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord also was crucified.

9 And some out of the peoples, and tribes, and tongues, and nations, look on their carcase three days and a half, and suffer not their carcasses to be put 10 into a tomb. And they who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the

f 14 : 8 ; 17 : 5 ; 18 : 10 ; Isa. 1 : 10.

u 18 : 24.

x 17 : 15.

y Ver. 2, 3, 11.

z Ps. 79 : 2, 3.

a John 16 : 20.

b Esther 9 : 19, 22.

c Ver. 5, 6 ; 16 : 10.

have seemed to the opposing Jews as though any possible Christianity were crucified with him; men rejoiced over a dead Jesus. All possible dishonor is heaped upon them when dead. No greater indignity could be shown than to ill treat a dead body. **In the street.** The bodies lie exposed in the broad, open space, where all may see them. No indignity is too great to be heaped upon them. It is a street of the great city. Is this the same as the holy city of ver. 2? Alford contends that it is not; many suppose the reference to be to Rome or Babylon. It is evident, on a full consideration, that the great city and the holy city refer to the same place under differing aspects. That it is Jerusalem that is referred to is evident from the expression where also their Lord was crucified. Jerusalem is called Gomorrah in Isa. 1 : 10; it is likened to Sodom in Ezek. 16 : 46. God had spoken of Jerusalem as the place of his abode, his rest (Ps. 132 : 13, 14). But as a degenerate city, standing for a degenerate people and a degenerate church, it is a Sodom and Egypt. The literal Jerusalem was licentious (*Hosea 4 : 14*). Both the literal Jerusalem and the degenerate church persecuted the work of Christ, it is therefore fittingly called an Egypt. The great city is not, therefore, any term for the disciples of Christ, nor for the heathen nations, but for the nominal church of Christ now alienated from true devotion to Jesus. Both Sodom and Egypt were sinful, incurring great guilt and bringing doom upon themselves. It represents, therefore, the professing church submitting to the world and in alliance

with it. The fine gold had become dross (*Ezek. 22 : 18*).

9. This verse continues the description of the wretched state of the dead witnesses. A fourfold designation of the people of the world follows. **People**, rather, *peoples*; **kindreds**, rather, *tribes*; **tongues** and **nations**. See, rather, *look upon*. **Three days and an half.** Elliot takes this literally, making it refer to the three and a half years intervening between the ninth session of the Lateran Council and the nailing up of the ninety-five theses upon the doors of the Wittenburg church by Luther, Oct. 31, 1517. There is no foundation for the theory that a day stands for a year, nor in this symbolical book do we look for actual dates and periods. For a broken period of time, the half of seven, a time of trouble, the church seems to be dead and to have no friends at death or in death. **Graves**, rather, *tombs*. An unburied body among all ancient peoples would be a sight horrible to look upon. The seer represents Christ's cause on the earth as, to outward eyes, dead, gazed upon as a hated thing, and not suffered to be buried.

10. The unseemly treatment of the crushed church continues. **Dwell upon the earth.** This refers, not to all the inhabitants on the earth, but as elsewhere to earthly minded men. A dead church, an absent Christ, a seemingly forgetful God, are an occasion of rejoicing to the world. It has a kind of feast as a counterpart to the holy feasts of the church when they sent tokens of love to each other (*Neh. 8 : 10*; *Esther 9 : 22*). **Tormented.** The reference is to the plagues spoken of in ver.

- 11 And after three days and an half <sup>d</sup>the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which 12 saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. <sup>e</sup>And they ascended up to heaven <sup>f</sup>in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.
- 13 And the same hour <sup>s</sup> was there a great earthquake, <sup>b</sup>and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the

- 11 earth. And after the three days and a half, the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell on those 12 who beheld them. And they heard a great voice out of heaven, saying to them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their 13 enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and in the earthquake were killed of men seven thousand names; and the rest

<sup>d</sup> Ezek. 37 : 5-14.<sup>e</sup> 12 : 5.<sup>f</sup> Acts 1 : 9.<sup>g</sup> 6 : 12.<sup>h</sup> 16 : 19.

8. The church true to Christ is regarded as a source of blessing to the penitent, but a torment to those fixed in wickedness. It was so in Ephesus (*Acts 19 : 25-29*); it was so in Thessalonica (*Acts 17 : 6*). Jesus himself created confusion because he bore witness to the truth (*Matt 8 : 29*). The church must always witness for God in behalf of righteousness; it causes trouble because it holds up the perfect standard of God. If the church were dead there would be nothing in the world to protest against wrong-doing and condemn, in God's behalf, the sinfulness of the world. It is better to be tormented now and, as a result, abandon sin, than to continue in sin and be tormented forever (*Luke 16 : 24*). The world always rejoices over a church that ceases to torment it, over a church that comes down to its level.

11. The third stage is portrayed in this verse, the resurrection of the dead witnesses. Here, in a highly symbolic way, the seer describes God's thoughts concerning his church and the final outcome. The cause of Christ on the earth will not be permitted to die out, even if its life be at a low ebb. It is just as if a resurrection should come to the two dead witnesses. The slumbering, persecuted church took a new life. **The spirit of life**, rather, *the breath of life*, came into them; they stood upon their feet. The seer has in mind the symbolic resurrection in the valley of dry bones (*Ezek. 37*), the picture of the resuscitation of the national life. A reformation, a revival, came to them so that now again the church has a visible life in the sight of men. The beholders are struck with terror. God's cause is not really dead. The dead Christ and the dead church come out

of their death to new power. The world's triumph speedily ended, and the final and perpetual triumph of the witnesses begins.

12. Heaven is on the side of the witnesses. The **voice** is perhaps that of the strong angel of 10 : 1. Jesus went up into the heavens in a cloud. The ascension was the sign of his approval by God, and the assurance of his elevation to a place of greater power. In a symbolic way the witnesses ascend **in a cloud**, rather, *in the cloud*. Jesus is on the side of the church, gives it renewed power, and glorifies it as if it were publicly taken up into the skies, there to share in the glory of the ascended Redeemer. All this is symbolic, not literal. Nothing like this has ever occurred on the earth, nor will take place in a literal way. But it has taken place again and again in a thoroughly real way. When the church seemed to be almost entirely dead, when all the forces of the world were arrayed against it, then Jesus has given to it, as it were, a resurrection to a life of power, and has glorified it in the sight of its enemies.

13. Here we have the effect of all these movements upon the world. When God blessed his witnesses, a judgment fell upon the ungodly world. The earthquake is always the symbol of judgment. It is here a judgment restrained by mercy; the tenth part of the city fell, not the entire city. **Of men seven thousand**, literally, *seven thousand names of men*, perished. No literal earthquake anywhere, no literal killing of men is meant. It is as though an earthquake destroyed men—men who were in revolt against God. It may be that the historic Jerusalem contained seventy thousand peo-

remnant were affrighted, <sup>i</sup>and gave glory to the God of heaven.

*The seven trumpets—Sounding of the seventh trumpet, or third woe; song of praise to God.*

14 <sup>k</sup>THE second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And <sup>l</sup>the seventh angel sounded; <sup>m</sup>and there were great voices in heaven,

began afraid, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

*i 14:7; 15:4; Josh. 7:19.*

*k 8:13; 9:12; 15:1.*

*l 8:2-6; 10:7.*

*m 19:6; Isa. 27:13.*

ple; if so, then one-tenth of the population perished. All that is meant here is that God, in some way, sent his righteous judgments upon the world of the ungodly, so that it is manifest that the church was his, and that the world was against him, and that he was against the world (*Mal. 3:18*). God can make a judgment day in this world. **Remnant were affrighted and gave glory.** The allusion is not here to the Jews as such, nor to the conversion of the Jews or others, nor to the conversion of the degenerate church. They glorified God only as they saw his righteous character, his power, his judgments. There is no recorded repentance, no recorded conversion. The scene is like that in *9:20*, where were great judgments on the wicked, but no moral change wrought in them. It is acknowledged that God has triumphed. **God of heaven.** In this way God is spoken of in the later Old Testament books (*Ezra 1:2; Neh. 1:4*). There were no two literal witnesses who had miraculous power, who died and were refused burial; there was no literal resurrection and ascension to heaven; there was no literal earthquake whereby any part of any city was destroyed. It is all symbolic in its nature, capable of natural interpretation as the picture of a witnessing church, depressed by persecution, into which new life came from Christ whereby it had, as it were, a resurrection and an exaltation as if it had ascended into the skies like its personal head — Christ. Many times in the past the cause of Christ has thus been exalted. In time to come there will be yet more splendid exaltations.

**14.** We are now ready for the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Before it sounds announcement is made as before

the fifth and sixth trumpets. The words of this verse are to be connected with the closing part of chap. IX. The two visions form no part of the sixth or seventh trumpet. The reason the verse does not occur in immediate connection with *9:1* is that then we would have looked for the sounding of the trumpet at once, whereas it was needful for the two visions to intervene.

**15-19. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET SOUNDS.** The seventh and last trumpet now sounds. It is, at the same time, the third woe trumpet. It is in the course of time introduced by and included in this trumpet that the consummation spoken of in *10:7* comes to its completion. The seventh seal brought the course of events to a completion, when all opposition broke down, when disturbances had come to an end. This was indicated by the silence in heaven (*8:1*). Here, also, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, is the final announcement that the victory is assured. The two series run parallel to each other, covering the entire course of human history, viewing it under different aspects. Seven stands for completeness. Opposition breaks down, and Jesus takes his rightful position as the acknowledged Lord of all.

**15.** Following the sounding of the trumpet were great voices. These voices do not come from the elders, for they speak in ver. 17. The voices may represent, in a general way, the feelings of all created beings, the highest intelligences in heaven, over the knowledge of the impending triumph of Jesus as the sovereign of the earth. The voices are in heaven, rejoicing over the triumph on the earth. All parts of the moral universe are one, rejoicing or disturbed together. The words ut-

saying, <sup>a</sup>The kingdoms of this world are become the *kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; <sup>b</sup>and he shall reign for ever and ever.

16 And <sup>c</sup>the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying,

We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty,

<sup>d</sup>Which art, and wast, and art to come. Because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, <sup>e</sup>and hast reigned.

*n* 12 : 10; *Ps.* 22 : 27, 28; *Isa.* 24 : 23; *Obad.* 21.

*p* 4 : 4; 19 : 4.

saying, The kingdom of the world is become our Lord's, and his Christ's; and he will reign forever and ever.

16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell on

17 their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give thanks to thee, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy

*o Ps.* 146 : 10; *Dan.* 2 : 44; 7 : 14, 27; *Heb.* 1 : 8.

*q* 1 : 4, 8; 4 : 8; 16 : 5. *r* 19 : 6.

tered were: **The kingdoms of this world**, rather, *The kingdom of the world*. It is here declared that the dominion over all things in the world has passed into the hands of Jehovah and Jesus, the Lord and his Christ. There was a time when God was all in all. There came alienation in heaven and on earth, so that his holy sway was not recognized. Organized rebellion took place; sometimes impiety seemed to reign supreme; great nations had false conceptions of God, and worshiped impure deities. Persecutions of God's faithful people took place so that piety hid in caves and was clothed in rags. Meanwhile God had his large plans in operation. Jesus was slain, in God's plan, from the foundation of the world (*13 : 8*). Jehovah promised the Son the ultimate triumph of his kingdom (*Ps. 2 : 7-9*). That time predicted and prepared for, the rulership of all things by God through the Son, had now come. As is evident from ver. 18, the consummation has not yet actually been achieved, but it is in process of achievement. During the period embraced by the seventh trumpet and inaugurated by it, the glorious end will be accomplished. Whether by the conversion or the destruction of the wicked this result will be brought about, so that in the new heavens and the new earth resulting from this, nothing unclean will be found (*2 Peter 3 : 13*). Toward this end the church must work, for this our prayers ascend. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for that time to come when earth and heaven should be one (*Matt. 6 : 10*). **He shall reign.** The reference is to Christ. He will forever be the head of the church, though in *1 Cor. 15 : 28* we are

taught that when Christ shall have finished his mediatorial work he will himself become subordinate to the Father.

**16.** The elders represent the redeemed church. They *sat*, rather, *sit*, before God on their *seats*, rather, *thrones*. Their rulership with Christ is plainly taught in the term, *thrones*. They rejoice, as the angels cannot, over the triumph of Christ on the earth, so that now all will be his. They attribute all the glorious result to God as the ultimate source of power, therefore they **worshiped** him, falling down upon their faces. There will never come a time in the glorified life that the saints will not be called upon reverently to worship God. He will always remain God, and they will always remain sinners saved by the grace of God.

**17.** We have here their words of praise. We had in *5 : 18* a song of praise by them, differing from this in that God has now revealed himself. **God** is Jehovah, the self-existing one; the **Almighty**, as shown in his overcoming all things for and in behalf of Christ. He is one who is and who was. **Omit, art to come.** This is to be omitted, as in Standard revision, because in the course of events, as here indicated, God has come in the full and final revelation of his plans on the earth. It takes a long time for God to unfold his plans, to bring them to pass, but there comes a fulness of times (*Gal. 4 : 4*) when his purposes are accomplished. **Great power.** This always had been God's, but in great patience he had permitted men and nations to act as if he were a God who could not control them. There is now the open

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

18 great power and didst reign. And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those who fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy those who destroy the earth.  
 19 And the temple of God that is in

*s* Ver. 2, 9; *Ps.* 2 : 1.      *t* 6 : 10; *Isa.* 26 : 19-21; *Dan.* 7 : 9, 10.      *u* 22 : 12; *Matt.* 5 : 12; *2 Thess.* 1 : 5-7.  
*x* 13 : 10; 18 : 6; *Jude* 15.      *y* 15 : 5-8; *Isa.* 6 : 1-4.

manifestation of this power, not the assumption of it. Men do not now get a fitting conception of God's power on account of his patience and self-limitations. **Reigned.** God's power is manifested, his laws are obeyed.

**18.** This verse contains the words of the elders. Four distinct statements are made: (1) **The nations were angry**, rather, *wroth*. This shows the restiveness of the nations, the ungodly heathen peoples at the requirements of God. We find in *Ps.* 2 the manifestation of this spirit. They rise now to a redoubled hatred against God as the energy of God becomes more manifest. (2) **Thy wrath.** Man's wrath enkindles God's holy wrath. Under its consuming power no one, man or nation, can stand. It is not vindictive, but vindictive. Men misconceive God who think only of his patience and tenderness. God's anger is his holiness in active exercise toward the wilfully impenitent. A God who could not be angry would be a God who could not be pleased. (3) **The time of the dead, that they should be judged**, rather, *to be judged*. It is maintained by Milligan that this refers to the judgment of the unrighteous dead alone, inasmuch as the word to judge means, in John's writings, to condemn. But it is evident that the reference is to a general resurrection of the dead, because while the wicked dead may be judged in the sense of being condemned, the righteous dead will be rewarded. The seventh trumpet brings us therefore to the final ending of the dispensation. The resurrection is one of the final things, beyond which are the endless conditions of men. (4) **Give reward**, rather, *give their reward*. This has reference to the righteous alone. They are graciously re-

warded by God. Saved for Christ's sake they are rewarded for their works' sake. The persons rewarded are designated as **prophets**, where the allusion may not be to any specific order of persons, but to all Christian people in the prophesying work, the witnessing work of the church. **Saints** are the prophets on the side of their holiness. **Fear God.** This designates the saints on the side of their relation to God. It is a universal reward for the righteous, for God forgets no one, **small and great**. A cup of cold water and a missionary journey of Paul are alike remembered and rewarded. **Destroy . . . earth.** Their wrath awakened God's wrath. Their destruction of the earth called for their destruction by God. Destroying the earth refers to its destruction as a place of holiness and happiness for which it was, at the first, intended. Men are destroyed when their moral natures are corrupted. The earth is destroyed when it is unfitted to be the abode of holy beings. Peter speaks of the formation of the new earth by the destruction of the former wicked world (*2 Peter* 3). Destruction, either of matter or spirit, does not mean a blotting out, an annihilation. John makes no allusion in this place to the glorious change to take place in the structure of the physical universe.

**19.** At the close of the seventh seal we had the view of an angel standing at the altar (8 : 3); at the close of the seventh bowl we have a glimpse of the temple (15 : 7, 8); in like manner we have, at this point, the seventh trumpet, a disclosure of the innermost holy place. This gives in vision what has been given in words in ver. 14-18. **Temple.** The reference is to an ideal place of worship in the heavens, corre-

in heaven; and there was seen in his temple <sup>a</sup> the ark of his testament.

And <sup>a</sup>there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, <sup>b</sup>and great hail.

*z Exod. 25:21, 22.*

*a 8:5; 16:18.*

*b 16:21.*

heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen in his temple; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and a great hail.

sponding to the earliest temple or tabernacle on the earth. It is maintained by some that the reference in this place to the temple shows that the actual temple in Jerusalem was yet standing when this book was written, hence that it was written before A. D. 70. The interpretation of the entire book would be greatly affected if this were true. But the ark of the covenant, here seen in vision, was not found in the temple built after the return from the captivity. Inasmuch as the ideal in the heavens must correspond with the actual temple on the earth, the reference must be, not to the temple, but to the tabernacle. The opening of the temple, the innermost part, to the gaze of men, shows that God will now dwell with men; he keeps nothing from them; their gaze upon the most sacred things is not, in any way, impeded. There is seen **the ark of his testament**, rather, *covenant*, the symbol of God's faithfulness, the pledge of his love. By reason of his faithfulness the wicked are punished and the righteous are rewarded. Five things, indicative of his judgments, are mentioned: **lightnings, voices, thunderings, great hail.** Similar features occur in the seventh seal (8:5); in the seventh bowl (16:18). The **earthquake** signifies the removal of the things that can be shaken, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain (<sup>Heb. 12:27</sup>). Only God and his cause are abiding. No earthquake can shake the foundation of God's purposes or plans.

NOTE I. THE FORTY AND TWO MONTHS. Alford says, on the terms used for designating time: "My principle is to regard them as still among the things unknown to the church and awaiting their elucidation by the event." In Dan. 7:25 and 12:7 we have a basis for the terms used in this book, a time, times, and half a time. It is thus used in the Old and New Testaments in a like manner. It may be understood, without any question,

that it is not used in a literal sense. In a book of this kind, where everything is in vision, where all terms—Jerusalem, Babylon, temple—are used in a symbolic sense, terms indicating time must be used in the same way. This book is neither a history nor an arithmetic. It is often taken for granted that in prophetic books each day stands for a year. For this there is no foundation. Appeal is often made to Num. 14:33, 34; Ezek. 4:4-16 to substantiate this view. But in each of these cases the term day and year meant a literal day and year, but it is expressly stated that the actual day is used as a symbol of the actual year. It is not a principle of predictive prophecy that a day stands for a year. It was predicted, in reference to the flood, that the rain should fall forty literal days, not meaning thereby forty years. In Isa. 7 sixty-five years mean literal years; in Isa. 16:14 the three years are literal years; in Jer. 25:4 the seventy years of the captivity are seventy literal years. No one thinks of applying this principle of a day for a year to the millennium, making it extend over three hundred and sixty thousand years. There is no foundation whatever in the Bible for this assumed principle introduced by so many writers on this book, that in all cases where the term day is used that a year must be understood. It is to introduce the utmost confusion to depend upon this principle to give light as to dates. In Dan. 9:24-27 the term weeks means literally a seven, without indicating whether it is a seven of days or years. When the reference is to days, the term days is inserted, as in 10:2, 3. It gives no support to the theory that a day stands for a year. This theory forms the foundation for the interpretations of Bengel, Barnes, and many others. J. A. Smith makes the forty and two months mean twelve hundred and sixty years. The beginning of this period, when the outer court shall be trodden under foot,

is variously placed by interpreters, who adopt this theory. Some regard the time of Cyprian, an African bishop who made large claims for the church, the beginning of this period—A. D. 248; others place the origin of the papacy, A. D. 250, as the beginning. Some regard the beginning of idolatrous worship in A. D. 385, as the beginning. Various other dates have been fixed upon, as 380, when Theodosius recognized the validity of the papal claims; 533, in the days of Justinian, who formally recognized the power of the pope. By adding twelve hundred and sixty years to the year of departure, interpreters have assumed to find some event indicating a great and blessed era when the days of darkness for the church had passed away. All such calculations in the past have ended only in disappointment and disaster. In truth, all calculations must be utterly wrong that introduce arithmetical principles here as though visions and symbols and the most poetical imagery were capable of being confined by definite historical statements and arithmetical formulas.

The only correct method of interpreting these terms of time is to construe them in a symbolic way. It would be out of place to regard them as other than symbolic in a book so full of symbols. We would naturally expect the periods of time to be taken in a figurative way when the great factors in the book, Egypt, Babylon, Euphrates, are to be taken, not in their literal import, but as symbols of great ideas. It is a trait common to all these periods of time, that they present a broken and incomplete aspect. They are not periods of completeness, a seven years, a rounded-out period, but a period broken off midway. It is an unfinished course. This broken and abrupt form in the numbers employed is, in itself, a strong indication that they are used in a symbolic, not in a literal, import. The broken form indicates that these terms express, not absolute, but relative periods of duration. When we remember that John is describing there the course of the entire spiritual world, on the one side, and the entire opposing anti-Christian forces, on the other, we may well regard it as an impossibility to mark out

in well-defined limits the conflicts of such mighty powers over so large a field. The trampling under foot of the holy city by heathen powers, the destructive power of the beast (13: 6); the persecution of Christ's faithful witnesses (11: 3); the hiding of the church in the wilderness (12: 6); all these assaults on God's cause, though successful for a time, can end in only one way at last, a complete and final defeat. And, therefore, the triumph of evil is indicated, in a symbolic way, by its lasting for an incomplete and broken period only. Three and a half signifies the triumph of evil over good; the triumph of good over evil is signified in a seven, the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The broken period means for the evil a failure. So far as the numbers themselves are concerned, the periods may be centuries or millenniums in extent. The broken period signifies a failure in the end, for evil cannot come to a complete and final triumph in the moral government of God. Nor need we concern ourselves about the time for the beginning of this period of time. Neither the starting-point nor the termination is sharply marked out. It could not be otherwise, for moral agencies do not have birth at a given, definite point of time. Corruptions and reformations are gradual in their movements. The field is the world, and the cause of Christ on the earth is the great thought under consideration through these symbols. We must, therefore, utterly reject as out of harmony with the spirit of the book, the fixing of any limits for beginning this period, or definitely marking out its termination. All definite calculations in the past have proved a failure; it must be so for all definite predictions in time to come. The prophecy is not written to show men distinct times and seasons, but to outline the dangers confronting the church: the perils of apostasy, the persecutions coming on the church, the final triumph of God's cause, the necessary failure of evil plans; to mark out the essential function of the church as a witnessing body, speaking in behalf of truth to all men and ages. It cannot be known why the term months is used in one case, days in another, and times, meaning years, in another. In a general

way these three correspond with each other, though it is not possible to prove that all begin at the same time, and have precisely the same course in history. All alike speak of a fragmentary course, broken in upon so that failure comes in the end. If the course of the church were denoted in a symbolic way, it would be by a complete number—as seven or ten. In the millennium we have a perfect contrast to the comparatively brief time and broken periods that mark the course of sin. The one thousand is formed from the number denoting the totality of earthly things—ten, and this is multiplied by itself three times. Here we cannot think of a definite period of time, but only of the prophecy and symbol of a perfect completeness, a rounded-out whole, a triumph for God's cause. What a contrast between the three and a half days, the three and a half years, representing the usurped dominion of sin and the perfect triumph of the Redeemer and his cause! In this way the symbols speak words of comfort and hope, but we may not look for definite numbers as if we were reading a church history. The outlines are distinct enough, however, to enable us to see the struggles ahead of the church, the seeming defeat for a time, and the grand and crowning success of Christ and his cause at the end. In this we may rest, and in this we may rejoice.

**NOTE II. THE FIGURATIVE INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION ALONE SATISFACTORY.** This part of the book of Revelation furnishes a touchstone as to the method of interpretation to be adopted. There is the literal method finding in the terms earth, sea, grass, the physical objects thus named. The one-third and the one-fourth mean these mathematical parts. When the term temple is used, in ver. 1, it is declared that the temple must at that time be standing, and that the actual temple must be meant. Alford takes the large part of this vision in a literal way regarding the two witnesses as actual persons yet to appear, having mighty powers dwelling in them. To regard these persons as literal persons involves a literalness in the details so that a fire proceeds out of their mouths. A

like literal interpretation would compel us to conceive a sword proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus in the first chapter. This would be not only grotesque as a matter of taste, but irreverent. If such a vision were placed upon canvas and regarded in a literal manner, it would have no power in teaching noble and lofty thoughts. It is only when we regard these visions with their details in a figurative way, teaching truths symbolically without any thought of literalness, it is only then that they appeal to us, to our minds and imaginations. Their teachings are none the less real because regarded as figurative. The parables are effective teachers, although they are in the domain of figures, and must be interpreted by the imagination.

1. The temple is not to be taken in a literal way, either as then existing or as destroyed. The term is that which is applied to the innermost shrine, the holy of holies. John is thinking of the ideal temple; his conception is that God's own people constitute the real shrine in which God dwells. In conformity with this conception, the people of God are represented as measured with a rod, that is, tested as to their moral and spiritual character. John is thinking of their spiritual height. In the vision in 7:4, God's people are numbered; here they are measured.

2. That Jerusalem is not to be taken in a literal way is evident from the term used; it is that city which, spiritually, is known as Sodom and Egypt. He is not thinking at all of mere locality, he is rather thinking of that spirit of the old-time Sodom and Egypt, the corruption and oppression of the world that crucified the Lord. The use of the term "spiritually" by John implies that all the terms here used—city, temple, altar, court, measure, are to be interpreted in a figurative manner. It is a great mistake, however, to think that a figurative meaning is any less real and instructive than a literal meaning. A vision can teach most effectively only through a figurative interpretation.

3. When we come to the interpretation of the meaning of the two witnesses, it is evident that we must discard the literal meaning. John is thinking of Elijah with his wonderful

power in prayer, of Moses with his making use of nature to answer Pharaoh, of Zechariah, of the witnessing of the church and its struggles, of the dark times spiritually; he therefore pictures the church under the aspect of the two witnesses giving such a testimony as would be taken in the Jewish courts. That John does not mean two literal persons is evident from the details attending them and their work, also from the consideration that their body—not bodies—remains unburied (ver. 8). Understood in this way the two witnesses might embrace thousands of witnessing believers, true to God and the truth. To depict upon canvas two holy persons breathing out fire would be revolting; to conceive of a witnessing church as giving testimony that convicts and overwhelms men, this is worthy of a divine revelation.

4. The resurrection and the ascension are also in accord with the figurative interpretation, bearing witness that God's power is put forth in behalf of a persecuted and witnessing people, the open assurance that Christianity is a divine revelation. The evidences of Christianity will have a complete triumph in these days foretold. As Elijah overcame the four hundred and fifty prophets, as Moses overcame all the resistance of Pharaoh, in like manner the witnessing church will present evidence that will be as plain and as convincing as if it were written in the sky. There have been times when the learning, the science, the philosophy of the world seemed to be against the church, the Book, the teachings of the gospel. Christianity is so intrinsically reasonable, so worthy of the intellectual and spiritual apprehension by all men, its evidences so growingly manifest—all this is depicted before the mental vision by the lifting up of the witnessing church, in the presence of all men, into the sky and seated on the throne of the almighty God. The vision is prophetic, consolatory; its meaning plain to all.

**NOTE III. THE SECOND VISION OF CHAPTER XI.** The temple stands for the pure and faithful church; the outer court stands for the unfaithful professing church; the Gentiles represent the non-confessing world. Three classes

of persons are here portrayed. The treading down of the holy city means the domination of the pure church by the alliance of the unfaithful church and the world. This falling away, the change of the holy city (ver. 2) into a merely great city (ver. 8), is spoken of elsewhere. Paul speaks of an apostasy (<sup>2</sup> Thess. 2 : 14); John speaks of anti-christ (1 John 2 : 18). In this book we find the beginnings of a falling away, corruption coming into the church. In the letters to the churches of Ephesus, Sardis, Pergamos, Thyatira (<sup>chap.</sup> 2, 3) are signs of declension in piety of life and purity of teaching. It needs but an enlargement of these to conform to the teaching of this vision. The church, in the end, must conquer, but before the end is reached much darkness and corruption will interfere with her work, and will mar her beauty. The period of this depressed state of the church is of indefinite duration, but embracing doubtless long ages. It is indicated by the broken number three years and a half. During this time the real church, though not a reigning church, is a witnessing church, holding up and representing Christ. It has power in and through prayer, it works vast changes in society equivalent to the shutting up of the heavens and bringing plagues on men. It is, therefore, hated by the world, persecuted. There come times when it is seemingly suppressed. Voltaire boasted that he, unaided, would destroy what it took twelve men to build up. The dark times are described by the rejoicing of the nations over its fall. But because it is Christ's church it cannot be utterly and finally prostrated. As the dead and seemingly vanquished Christ came to be the risen and glorified Christ, in like manner the church will be as its head. It, therefore, gains renewed power. It becomes a triumphant church, just as though it were taken up into the skies to be with its risen Lord and Redeemer. Blessings on the church, and judgments on the world accompany each other. The church is the one great agency of Christ in the world for bearing testimony, for convicting the wicked, for bringing about the final conquest. Jesus is a living Christ working through his church, having in mind a plan for the

final triumph of his church, and the final downfall of the wicked. Only by regarding all these terms and numbers in a symbolic way can we get a consistent idea of the teachings here intended to be portrayed.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. God has a perfect estimate of the character of all worship on the earth and of all worshipers. Jesus measured the Pharisee and rejected him; he measured the publican and accepted him. He regards especially the heart. The fitting sacrifices are given in Ps. 51:17 (ver. 1).

2. All formal and corrupt worship God rejects. God's people on the earth constitute the real temple of God; prayer and praise offered in the name of Jesus are the real offerings. Great organizations and splendid outward worship may avail nothing (ver. 2).

3. The church may not be able to work miracles, but it may be a faithful witness. In proportion as times grow harder and darker, the witnessing must increase. Every Christian must be a John the Baptist pointing to Jesus, who alone is able to save (ver. 3).

4. Christians are to give light in a dark world, to be a light shining in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19). The Christian is that one through whom Christ shines on men (ver. 4).

5. God notices all injury done to his people. He ministers grace for support, he makes their courage inspire others. Persecutions are not blessings in themselves, but they minister to the good of the church and the widening of the kingdom (ver. 8).

6. Prayer still has power. God still rules in nature for the sake of his cause and his people. The God of Moses and Elijah is not dead. Under like circumstances God may yet work like wonders (ver. 6).

7. Jesus and his church always have enemies. All sin, in its essence, is from Satan. It comes from the pit and leads to the pit. Sometimes sin comes as a beast, sometimes as a lamb (ver. 7).

8. Backsliding and apostasy bring great ills. A holy city may become a Sodom; a professed disciple may become an out-

cast; an apostle may be lost. Constant watchfulness and growth in grace are ever needful to prevent a falling away (ver. 8).

9. God's people and cause may suffer indignities, but God's love will rest upon them. Persecution may kill the body and destroy outward things. It cannot hurt the inner life.

10. God has a resurrection for every good cause. Defeat may come for a time, but God will ultimately give a triumph. Reformations and revivals have given new life to a slumbering church (ver. 11).

11. God will honor his people in the presence of the ungodly. The poor in spirit will sit on his right hand; the beggar Lazarus will lie in Abraham's bosom. The enemies of Christ will be placed under his feet (ver. 12).

12. The effect of God's providences should be to lead men to repentance. His judgments should alarm men; his love should melt men. God seeks to get to man through every avenue of his nature (ver. 13).

13. Jesus died that all things might be his. The work of getting hold of the world has been a slow process. In time, all in the world will be holy. The secular and the sacred will have the same meaning (ver. 15, 16).

14. There are gradual and blessed unfoldings of God's revelations to man. To us he is a God to be manifested. In time he will be a God manifested. Blessed are those who help God in his work, and blessed are those who rejoice with God in his accomplished work (ver. 17).

15. God is always the almighty. But he is so patient and forbearing that men mistake his almighty for impotence (ver. 17).

16. Man's wrath may be sinful and rebellious. God's wrath is holy. He must be indignant at wrong-doing. The dominant element in God now is mercy toward the penitent. In time his just and holy nature will shine out in rewarding the good and punishing the unholy (ver. 18).

17. A present Redeemer, an opened temple, an indwelling Holy Spirit, a holy fellowship, a cleansed nature—these will be the Christian's heritage (ver. 19).

## CHAPTER XII.

**SECTION VI. THE CHURCH AND HER THREE ENEMIES.** Having come to the end of the series of the seals and the trumpets, we might naturally expect to enter at once upon a vision of the bowls, the concluding series. Three chapters intervene before we come to the final series. It is generally agreed that in the twelfth chapter we have a vision that portrays the introduction of Christianity into the earth. Some have contended that the preceding visions concern themselves with glimpses of the Old Testament dispensation, and that the visions from this point onward represent the issues of the New Testament kingdom of God. Against this view is the fact that it is the Redeemer of men who opens the seals in the first series of visions. This entire book is the development of God's plans on the earth under the leadership and control of the Redeemer as such. The rather we have here a summary of the forces at work in the world, the contending powers of light and darkness, with a view of the enemies of the church for the first time portrayed in a definite way. This vision, in so far as it refers to a historical event, can refer only to the birth of Christ and the introduction of Christianity, and yet it comes in after the visions of the seals and of the trumpets have both been closed, a clear proof that the seer is not guided by the thought of a historical succession. As the visions of the seals and the trumpets cover the entire period of the Christian era, in like manner this vision portrays a conflict that extends over the same period and furnishes also a natural foundation for the following visions. The last series, that of the bowls, portrays, in the main, a judgment, not upon the ungodly world, but upon a degenerate church, as distinct from the faithful element in the church. It is essential, therefore, at this point, before we see the vision of the bowls, clearly to perceive the enemies by which the church became faithless, and at the same time to see the enemies overcome by the faithful people of God.

In this spiritual drama set before us there are in reality but two persons, the Redeemer and Satan. They are utterly

diverse in nature, the one heaven-born, redeeming men, in the form of man, lifted up to heaven; the other, hostile to God and his cause, destructive in his activities. Both of these, unseen by men, continue their leadership among men, acting through human agencies. Jesus works through his church, his body. Satan works through his agencies, the great beast that springs from the turbulent sea, representing the political forces of the world arrayed against Christ. By persecutions, force, the prison, and the stake; by fines and penalties; by banishments and restraints, the truth has been banished, outlawed, limited in its operations. Every age has known the meaning of the hostile attitude of the great world powers. Satan calls to his aid another agency—a beast with the appearance of a lamb (13:1), less dangerous in form, but the more easily doing its injurious work because not ferocious in appearance.

These two agents of Satan continue to figure on the stage until their final overthrow in the vision of 19:20. As the enemies of Christ assume a two-fold form, in like manner the church presents a divided form, the true church and the degenerate church, on which heavy judgments fall. In reality, from this time on in this book there are but two contestants for supremacy, the Redeemer and Satan, though both of them make use of human agencies. In the later visions we see the conquering Christ and his cause winning a mighty triumph (19:11). During all this period there is antagonism between the church and her foes. She, persecuted, hidden from view at times, is preserved by the loving care of God. Not always does the opposition to Christianity assume revolting forms as represented by a dragon with its Gorgonlike shapes, but always it is dragonlike in nature in that it is hostile to God. Sometimes the opposition to Christ will assume the shape of science, sometimes of literature, sometimes of art, of the drama, of political policies, of business success, but always at heart is a dislike of God. This vision does not present to us the downfall of these enemies of Christ, but we may know that somewhere before the visions end there will be a revelation of the triumph of Him

whose right it is to reign. We see this glorious issue in chap. XIX, XX. Fairbairn writes thus on this section: "This vision embraces an extensive range; it points back to the past as well as onward to the future in order to show how the evil originally sprung up, and how it was to develop itself till it reached the gigantic magnitude and formidable character it afterward assumed. This matter is represented both with the personal spite and malice of the tempter on account of the victory gained over him by Christ, and with the beast or worldly power in its varied forms and manifestations, more especially in the times following the general spread of Christianity after the deadly wound caused by the gospel had been healed. Out of the healing of the wound came Babylon, which consists in an unnatural conjunction of the church and the world, the church thereby becoming essentially antichristian; and because of the greatness of the doom incurred by such a degeneracy it has a very large and prominent place given to it in prophecy. In chap. XIII we are told how the introduction of Christianity led the worldly power to assume a form corresponding to the altered state of affairs; and the success following its altered policy implied that the church, to a large extent, had sacrificed its character and joined hands with the world." We have nothing to do in this section with the origin of evil; nor are we concerned with any scenes that took place before the beginnings of human history. We have before us the domain of the Christian era and the persons and the agencies that make for righteousness and for unrighteousness. Because Christ is in his church it remains true and holy; because Christ is for his church it will be triumphant in the end.

**THE FIRST GREAT ENEMY OF THE CHURCH.** This chapter occupies a central position in the order of thought in this book, beginning the presentation of some new teachings. It has come out, in the visions, that not only the world in its essentially heathenish character is to be subdued, but also a professedly religious, though a really worldly and antichristian domination,

has appeared. It is with this last that the final struggle occurs. This chapter is concerned with the question how this antichristian domination appeared. We have revealed, in clear outline, the three great foes who are steadfastly resisted by the church. In the succeeding parts of the book we have these enemies, one by one, overcome. It is a great comfort for God's people to remember that all the foes of the truth are manifest in God's sight. They are revealed to the eyes of the church, not that they may terrify her, but that they may put her on her guard and that, at the sight of their final and utter downfall, she may find cause of rejoicing. In the early parts of the book we had glimpses of Satan and his work in the persecution coming on the church (2:10); in his temptation to uncleanness (2:14). In this chapter we have a vision of the person of Satan himself in his power and malignity, the one great spirit enemy of God, of Christ, of the church, of all good things. As is so often the case in this book, we have, at the first, intimations and glimpses of some great power or teaching, and afterward the power or teaching fully unfolded. We have Satan fully revealed in his person and nature, the result of his seductions, his two allies and servants (chap. XIII), and then his final downfall (chap. XX).

This chapter divides itself naturally into three parts: The woman and the dragon (ver. 1-6); the warfare in heaven (ver. 7-12); the flight of the woman into the wilderness (ver. 13-17).

**1-6. THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON.** Two persons, utterly unlike each other, appear in this section in vision: the woman pure, white, clothed in light, representing God's cause; and a fiery, red, vicious dragon, horrible in appearance, representing the devil's cause. What takes place in reality in all human history, and in the Bible from the beginning to the closing, the irrepressible conflict between the good and the evil, is here personified. How evil came into the moral universe, why God permits Satan to exist, are unanswered problems. The Bible reveals God as opposing sin, punishing and restraining it, and ultimately subduing it.

*The woman clothed with the sun, persecuted by the dragon.*

**12** AND there appeared a great wonder [or, sign] 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.

**12** AND a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, and heavy with child, and she cries out, travailing in birth, and in pain to bring forth.

c Isa. 66 : 6-8; Micah 4 : 10; 5 : 3.

**1. And . . . heaven,** rather, *And a great sign was seen in heaven.* It was a sight that was in reality a **sign**, indicative of some great spiritual movement impending. It is the same word found in 1 : 1, there rendered signified. We have arrived at an important point in the book, and as showing this there appears a *great sign*, symbolic of some great teaching to be presented. Miracles are often spoken of as signs, thereby calling attention, not to the power displayed in them, but to their moral significance. *Heaven.* We are not to understand this term, when used in this book, as meaning, in its strict sense, the abode of God and the blessed ones. It means, here, that great theater where the visions pass before us, embracing, in their full meaning, heaven and earth. We are forced to this view for we cannot, in any literal way, regard the dragon as really dwelling in heaven where the holy God is. J. A. Smith well says: "We may conceive of the scene of the vision as being itself a vision taking in the earth and the firmament with its stars." The entire book, with its visions, significant of mighty changes, embracing thousands of years, portraying great opposing forces, with the Redeemer, the church, the powers of nature and Satan as actors comes before us as on a stage. The place where they are portrayed is the heaven spoken of, where the spiritual element appears in a predominant way, but where also the dragon and the wilderness are also portrayed together with God and his throne. The sign is a **woman clothed**, rather, *arrayed*, with all the heavenly bodies. The woman and the dragon form the same contrast here that the Son of man and the beasts form in Daniel, the imagery of which so much influences the mind of John. The **sun, moon, and stars** include all the heavenly

bodies mentioned in Gen. 1 : 16. The sun, the source of all light to us, constitutes her luminous garment. Nothing can be more striking or brilliant. In 1 : 16 the face of the glorified Jesus is like the sun shining in his strength. The *moon* is under her feet. This does not mean that it is in subjection to her, nor does it have any hidden or metaphorical meaning. It does not mean that the Jewish dispensation was under the feet of Christ, or that heathenism was to be overcome. The meaning is that she is completely invested with light from head to foot; she is all glorious in light. Every conceivable object in the skies that gives light is called in to aid in describing her moral beauty. The term, **twelve**, has doubtless some allusion to the twelve tribes representing God's collective people in the Old Testament times. In the New Testament we have the same number retained in the twelve apostles; the new Jerusalem has twelve gates (21 : 12). The crown worn by the woman is not one of sovereignty, such as is worn by kings, but is the garland of victory given to the conqueror. In this incidental way it is announced that the church and the cause of Christ are not destined to defeat but to conquest.

**2. A second feature** of the sign is here given. **And . . . child,** rather, *And she was with child. Cried,* rather, *Crieth out.* All the Old Testament is the prophecy of the coming Redeemer. In Gen. 3 : 15 is the promise of one who shall crush the head of the serpent. To Abraham is the promise that through his posterity all nations should be blessed (Gen. 12 : 3). Isaiah speaks of a coming child whose advent should usher in a reign of righteousness (Isa. 9 : 6, 7). This sign is simply the entire Old Testament prophecy coming to its fulfilment, the birth of one who should manifest God to men. In the seals there

3 And there appeared another wonder [or, sign] in heaven; and behold <sup>a</sup>a great red dragon, <sup>b</sup>h<sup>o</sup>ving seven heads

*d* 17:3; 12:9; John 8:44.

3 And another sign was seen in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having

*e* 17:9, 10; Dan. 7:7.

was seen the beginning of Christianity on the earth and its spread among men, the conqueror on the white horse (6:11). We come now again to the same historic starting-point, the coming of the divine one into a human life. Jesus is portrayed in this book as the Lamb, the Redeemer; but to be this among men he must be, in a human life, incarnate. We must look upon Jesus in a twofold way. As divine, he is the head of the church above all things, the Lord of David (*Matt. 22:43*); in his human nature he is the son of David, born of a woman, born under the law (*Gal. 4:4*), subject to all God's laws, submitting to baptism as an ordinance of God, a Jew, a member of God's outward kingdom, born as to the flesh of the stock of Abraham. Jesus was, therefore, while the only begotten Son of God, also a descendant of David, a member of God's Old Testament people. Jesus occupies varied relations to men and God. He is Son of man, Son of God, brother in the human race and sovereign Lord, the head of the church, the husband of the church which is his bride, the manifested God, an elder brother, subject to human temptations and weaknesses.

Who is meant by the woman? She cannot be the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord. Nowhere does she appear in the New Testament in this sublime way. She is blessed among women (*Luke 1:28*), but nowhere appears as aught else than a worshiper of Jesus (*Acts 1:14*). A few Romanists who dwell more on Mary than on Jesus interpret this of Mary. The woman can represent only the ideal cause of God, as represented by the church. Never has the church actually been such a glorious organization. It was not such in the Old Testament times, where it so often appears as a faithless servant of God (*Isa. 1:10; Mal. 3:8*). It was not such in the New Testament times when in all the local churches it was defective and sometimes glaringly corrupt (*1 Cor. 3:1-4*). The woman represents the church in a large, spiritual sense, God's real body on the earth. The New

Testament church is a distinct creation by Christ on a new basis, not that of blood descent, but of a distinct personal birth through the Spirit as the essential prerequisite for admission into the outward kingdom of God. But in a very real sense God's kingdom from the beginning, embracing both the Old and New Testament times, is one. In the beginning of the vision the reference is mainly to the church in its Old Testament form, subsequently to the church in its New Testament aspect. Swete regards the "woman" as the Jewish church. "The ancient expositors in general, beginning with Hippolytus and Methodius, understood the woman with child to represent the church, though some identified her with the blessed Virgin." "The ideal mother of the Lord is not the Virgin, but the Jewish church. Jerusalem is described in the prophets as a travailing woman." (Comp. *Michah 4:10*.) "Doubtless the church of the Old Testament was the mother of whom Christ came after the flesh. But here, as everywhere in the book, no sharp dividing line is drawn between the church of the Old Testament and the Christian society; the latter is viewed as the Jewish church come to maturity. Thus the woman who gave birth to the Christ is identical with her who, after his departure, suffered for her faith in him (ver. 13), and who is the mother of believers (ver. 17; comp. *Gal. 4:27*)." SWETE on 12:4.

3. The contrast to the woman, in appearance and character, is now seen. The term, **heaven**, is used here in the same sense as in ver. 1, as meaning the sphere of action. **Wonder**, rather, **sign**. **A great red dragon**. In its nature it is a *dragon*, ugly, bestial, malicious, horrible, and repulsive in disposition. It is *great*, implying great power in destructiveness. Its mission is not that of giving life and nourishing it, but the opposite, that of destruction. It is *red*, significant of its cruel and murderous disposition. (Comp. *John 8:44*; *1 John 3:12*; *Rev. 17:6*.) The **seven heads** denote the com-

and ten horns,<sup>4</sup> and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, <sup>5</sup> and did cast them to the earth.

And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, <sup>6</sup> for to devour her child as

seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. And his tail drags the third part of the stars of heaven; and it cast them to the earth.

And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth, he might

f 13 : 1.

g Dan. 8 : 9-12.

h Exod. 1 : 16; Matt. 2 : 3-16.

pleness of intelligence and power for carrying out its purposes. As a dragon he is perfect. His power and intelligence correspond with his nature and aims. The Lamb had seven horns, signifying the perfect power vested in him as Redeemer (<sup>5</sup>: 6). The **ten horns** here symbolize the complete world-power dwelling in the dragon. **Crowns**, rather, *diadems*. This term denotes sovereignty; the dragon rules as king. This same person has already been introduced as king in 9 : 11. He was there known as Abaddon or Apollyon; he is here revealed as the dragon, a horrible serpentlike thing, soon to be made known as the devil (*ver. 9*). It is noticeable that the crown of the woman (*ver. 1*) denotes victory; the dragon, the king of the hosts of darkness, will be defeated. There is a great world of dark and unseen forces of whose existence we become aware only through revelation. The infernal world comes to a headship in Satan.

**4.** This verse shows his destructive power, **his tail drew**, rather, *draweth*. The magnitude of the dragon and his power and fury are shown in this that he, with his tail, lashes the skies and throws down the stars. The present tense shows that this is his nature; he perpetually, or as long as he has opportunity, wars against the things of beauty and order. The *one-third* has frequently been noticed in this book, indicating an indefinite fractional part. His power is restrained; there are limits beyond which he cannot go. He cannot rob the entire sky of its stars (8 : 7-12; 9 : 15, 18). The proportion cannot be literally interpreted. **Stars of heaven.** Some think that the reference is to the fall of the angels, those who kept not their first estate (*Jude, ver. 6*). This is very doubtful. Some refer it to an apostasy among those who were teachers and leaders in the church, occupying a position of prominence, stars as it were in the

church, symbolized by the stars in the sky. It is best to give it an indefinite reference. The throwing down of the stars to the earth would, in the physical world, be an occasion of darkness, disorder, lawlessness, destruction. He takes position before the woman. **Dragon . . . woman**, rather, *dragon stands before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered he might destroy her child*. This expresses the attitude of Satan toward God's cause in all the ages. Pharaoh, several times called a dragon because of his ferocity, tried to crush the cause of God by destroying the first-born (*Ezek. 29 : 3*). His power, cruelty, and craftiness united to check God's cause. The New Testament Pharaoh is Herod. Both were men of evil heart; both made war upon Jehovah; both were defeated in their purposes. While the reference may find its clearest illustration in the attempt made at the birth of Christ to destroy God's cause on the earth by destroying him, yet it is true that during the entire ministry of Christ, Satan was his opponent and tempter (*Luke 4 : 13*; *John 13 : 2*). Wherever the woman is, wherever Christ's work is done and good lives are lived, there will be the dragon with intent to destroy. The dragon standing before the woman is a pictorial representation of the spirit of Satan in all his planning and agencies toward Christ, Christ's cause on the earth, and the individual Christian. Every good cause encounters the hatred and opposition of Satan. There is never a good deed planned, or good work begun, or a good life undertaken, but the dragon is waiting to devour the offspring. It is the most dangerous assault when the dragon assumes the shape of a tempter or danger dressed in white (<sup>2</sup> *Cor. 11 : 14*). The dragon always remains a dragon, whether he appears in a violent persecution or in a seductive worldliness.

5 soon as it was born. <sup>1</sup> And she brought forth a man child, <sup>k</sup> who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was <sup>l</sup> caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And <sup>m</sup> the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, <sup>n</sup> that they should feed

5 devour her child. And she brought forth a man-child, who is to shepherd all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God, and to his 6 throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they may nourish

<sup>i</sup> Matt. 1:25; Gal. 4:4.      <sup>k</sup> 2:26, 27; 19:15; Ps. 2:9.      <sup>l</sup> 11:12; Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:20.

<sup>m</sup> Ps. 91:1; Song of Sol. 2:14; 8:5; Ezek. 20:35.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Kings 17:3-6.

**5.** The child is born and his nature is portrayed. **And she . . . child,** rather, *And she was delivered of a son, a man child.* **Who . . . nations,** rather, *Who is to rule all the nations?* The ruling spoken of is that of acting as a shepherd. This one, so born, shall, as the essential part of his ministry, be a universal ruler. Over his own people and over the nations he shall exercise sway. The sway would begin to be exercised in his personal ministry and be continued so that, in time, his sway would everywhere be recognized. His method of ruling is indicated, **with a rod of iron.** The figure is taken from Ps. 2. The severer aspect of Christ's work is alluded to through this figure. He appears, not with the shepherd's peaceful crook, but with the iron rod to beat down, to break down all opposition. In the Gospels he appears mainly as a tender shepherd, but in the Psalms and in this book he appears as a conqueror, with many adversaries appearing, but all of them finally crushed by defeat. The prominent thought is that of opposition to Christ, but final victory on the part of Christ. In his ministry on the earth Jesus could utter woes (Matt. 24); could speak of a judgment day when the issues should be eternal life and eternal death. And the **child was caught up unto God and to his throne.** This means the exaltation and glorification of Jesus, not only in his own person, but in that of his people and church through him. There was an ascension to God's right hand. The ascension was God's testimony to his Sonship, was the assurance of safety to him from all perils, was the entrance into a personal fellowship with the Father in all his power whereby he might carry on his work on the earth more effectively. That interpretation whereby the reference is to the baptism

of the Emperor Constantine through which the Roman empire became nominally Christian, must be rejected. Part of Christ's ascension power was his bestowal of the Holy Spirit (John 16). No allusion is here made to the fundamental teaching concerning the sufferings and death of Jesus. These are presupposed in allusions elsewhere, when the efficacy of his death is spoken of as the source of his people's victory (ver. 11). The issue between Christ and the dragon cannot be doubtful, for the one is the assured Son of God, seated on his throne. The allusion is not simply to the one historical fact of his ascension, but to the continuous victory of Christ, his perpetual conquering reign. The incarnation and the ascension are the terminal points of our Saviour's earthly ministry. All the glory that Christ gets through his ascension is shared in by his people (Heb. 2:17).

**6.** Having learned the fate of the woman's child, we now turn to the course of the woman's history. **Wilderness.** It is probable that Elijah's flight into the wilderness, and his support there (1 Kings 17:6; 19:5), together with the wanderings in the wilderness for forty years by the children of Israel, may have laid the historical foundation for this picture. Jesus also found a home in the wilderness for forty days, and a heavenly ministration there (Matt. 4:11). This woman, the church, finds persecution, but finds a refuge in a wilderness. The term presupposes a time of darkness and depression; it also asserts a place of security and refuge. The flight is in accordance with God's plan and provision. **Prepared of God.** God will care for the things of Christ. **They may feed, nourish.** It is not stated by whom the church will be preserved, the indefinite *they* referring, in an in-

her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

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

her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred,

*o* 11 : 3; 13 : 5.

*p* Dan. 10 : 13, 21; 12 : 1; Jude 9.

*q* Ver. 3; 20 : 2.

definite way, to God's providential arrangements. **A thousand two hundred and threescore days.** This is the indefinite period of time alluded to heretofore (11 : 2, 3). This period of time, in whatever form given, is the half of seven years, the mark of completeness. It is indicative always of a broken and incomplete era, the expression of darkness, of suffering for the church. The same thought is presented again more fully in ver. 14. Whatever dark times come, the church is always safe because Christ is always on high, the reigning Christ; and the church is his own body. God saved Sodom so long as he had good people in it. Their departure meant its destruction. Jesus will always have a church on the earth, even though it be small in numbers, and hidden almost from the sight of men, and clothed in sackcloth. A churchless world would be a destroyed world.

**7-12. THE WARFARE IN HEAVEN.** This section follows naturally upon the first, in order of thought. In the first section the two contestants, the Son and the dragon, have been presented in their essential natures of light and darkness. There is now placed before us, in a poetical way, the contest in which they are engaged, designated as a war.

**7. War in heaven.** All that follows takes place in vision. It is not literal war, but the contest of opposing moral influences. To what time does this refer? Some refer it to some contest in the spiritual world, prior to human history, when Satan, by transgression, fell from his first estate. Milton, in his "Paradise Lost," so treats the passage. Alford finds in this passage "a mysterious series of events in the world of spirits in regard to which only fragmentary hints are given to us in the Scriptures." It is in order of time subsequent to the incarnation of Christ, which is represented in the first section of this chapter. It, therefore, does not refer to any event long prior to that time, events in the spiritual

world alone. The *heaven* spoken of is not the literal heaven, the place of holiness, where holy beings alone dwell. It is inconceivable in thought that Satan should be there in person, and that a war, in any sense of the word, should be waged there. When Satan is represented as in heaven (*Job 1 : 6; Zech. 3*), these are highly figurative passages, not implying that Satan in person is there. It would not be a heaven where Satan, in his utter malignancy, walked unhindered among God's people, and threw at them his false accusations. The heaven alluded to is that which so often appears in this book, the theater upon which the sacred drama is represented. The *war* represents the contest between the good and the bad forces. It embraces many agencies, many opposing forces, but all centering about the two persons, Jesus and Satan. **Michael . . . dragon,** rather, *Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon.* Michael is spoken of as the aggressor in the contest, beginning the hostilities. Who is meant by Michael? Some refer it to the Lord Jesus himself. The name, Michael, meaning "who is like God," is held to lead to this belief. In Jude (ver. 9) we read of Michael, the archangel, of whom but one is mentioned. In 1 Thess. 4 : 13 the archangel is associated with the return of the Lord Jesus. In Dan. 10 : 21 Michael appears as the protector of the chosen people in their contest with foreign powers. But Michael cannot be regarded as the Lord himself. In the Old Testament the angel of Jehovah is the designation of the Old Testament appearance of Jesus before his incarnation. Michael, standing in the Old Testament as the leader of the Lord's hosts, may be fittingly regarded in this book, which reproduces so much of the Old Testament, as the leader of God's holy forces. He is not Jesus himself, but stands as the representative of Jesus, just as the strong angel was a figurative representation of Jesus (*10 : 1*).

8 fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, <sup>t</sup>that old serpent,

8 and his angels, and they prevailed not, nor was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is

<sup>r</sup> Ps. 37 : 10.

<sup>s</sup> Luke 10 : 18; John 12 : 31.

<sup>t</sup> 20 : 2; Gen. 3 : 1, 4.

The passage does not mean that Jesus is that Michael spoken of in Dan. 10 : 21 or in Jude 9, but that he occupies here, as the leader of the spiritual forces, the same position that Michael there does. In other words, the term Michael is a representative one, Jesus is a spiritual Michael filling his place. **Angels.** The reference is not to angels in the literal sense of the word, but in a representative sense. Just as the historic Michael had his angels, so the spiritual Michael has his followers corresponding to angels, and here denominated angels. This is evident from the consideration of the terms used in ver. 11. The holy contestants of this passage are there described as conquerors. The agency used by them in their victorious conflict is the blood of the Lamb. But as angels do not overcome by or through the blood, this can refer to men alone who are saved through the sacrifice of Jesus. (Comp. 17 : 14.) Angels do not need the forgiveness, the regeneration, the help that comes through the blood. The warfare here described is that of Jesus through his witnessing and conquering church. **Dragon fought,** rather, *wurred.* There is a personal agency of Satan manifest in all human history, but appearing in a redoubled form since the advent of the Saviour. The dragon carries on his war through the perversion of doctrine, the seduction of leaders, the temptations of worldliness, the mixture of error with the truth, the stirring-up of persecution, the begetting of divisions. Through the slave trade, the rum traffic, the spirit of conquest on the part of nations, the oppressive use of power, through these agencies he to-day makes war among men, entailing large curses and bringing speedy ruin upon millions. He is a god of this world, so potential is his agency direct and indirect (2 Cor. 4 : 4). **Angels.** Satan has many helpers, led by him at his will, moved thereto by pleasure and profit.

8. The result of the contest is here given. Jesus speaks of Satan's defeat,

of his falling from heaven (Luke 10 : 18). He also speaks of Satan being judged, in the sense of being condemned and cast out as the result of his sacrificial death (Jobu 12 : 31; 16 : 11). Not only was there defeat for the dragon, but there was no place for him in heaven on the scene of the heavenly drama. All of this takes place in vision. In time it is after the introduction of Christianity upon the earth. The result of Christ's work is ultimately to defeat Satan, to crush him under foot so that on the theater of the vision Satan is not beheld at all. In the Old Testament Satan is, in a figurative and poetical way, spoken of as accusing, in person, the godly in heaven. Jesus, in his own person, brought defeat for Satan, making the demons subject to his disciples (Luke 10 : 20). In time Satan will be bound, his influence will be largely limited, even as it now is judicially limited. And finally he will be shut up in the bottomless pit, so that the godly shall forever be freed from his power (chap. 20).

9. This verse more fully explains and illustrates ver. 8. No place was found in heaven for the dragon and his angels, for he was cast out. Adam was cast out of Eden; in like manner Satan was cast out of the holy heaven as soon as he became a Satan. This came, not from God's almighty ness alone, for there is always a deep gulf between the holy God and unholiness. He is now, in vision, cast out of that theater upon which this vision is presented. This casting out came coincident, in time, with the sufferings and ascension of Christ, and as their direct resultant. The dragon is defined in a threefold way, **that old serpent.** The allusion is to Gen. 3 : 1, 4. Satan is malicious, crafty, full of wiles, having those qualities commonly attributed to the serpent. In the Babylonian records the picture of the temptation is presented under the form of the serpent tempting the man to eat of the forbidden fruit. Among many ancient peoples the serpent was looked upon

<sup>a</sup>called the devil, <sup>b</sup>and Satan, <sup>c</sup>which deceiveth the whole world: <sup>d</sup>he was cast out into the earth, and his angels <sup>10</sup>were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven.  
<sup>a</sup>Now is come salvation, and strength, <sup>b</sup>and the kingdom of our God,  
<sup>c</sup>And the power of his Christ.  
For the accuser of our brethren is cast down,  
<sup>d</sup>Which accused them before our God day and night.

called the Devil and Satan, who leads astray the whole habitable earth; he was cast down to the earth, and his <sup>10</sup>angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before

<sup>a</sup>Matt. 13:39; John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8. <sup>x</sup>Job 1:6. <sup>y</sup>20:3; 2 Cor. 11:3. <sup>z</sup>9:1. <sup>a</sup>11:15; 19:1.  
<sup>b</sup>Dan. 2:44. <sup>c</sup>Ps. 2:8-12; 110:5, 6. <sup>d</sup>1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:9; 2:5; Zech. 3:1.

as the embodiment of wisdom, and, therefore, associated with their worship. Its power to attract, to bewitch, to harm makes the serpent a fitting representation of Satan. Satan is a serpent in his malignity; an old serpent by reason of his centuries of wicked activity. **Devil.** This means a slanderer. He slanders God to men. He presented to the minds of the first parents a mean and little conception of God (Gen. 3:5). Any wrong conception of God will make a corrupted religion, inasmuch as God himself is the center of all worship and all religion. He is also described in ver. 10 as a slanderer of Christian people. Satan means an enemy. He is the one pre-eminent enemy of God, of man, of all good things. His work is that of deceiving men. **Deceiveth.** If Satan came openly as Satan, avowing his purpose and nature, he could work no ill. His power lies in his deceptiveness; he is a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). **The whole world** means the habitable world. All, so long as men abide on the earth, are exposed to his temptations by reason of their human nature and their limitations. Even Jesus was tempted during all his earthly ministry. The saints can escape only by constant watchfulness (1 Peter 5:8). **Cast . . . earth,** rather, *cast down to the earth.* This is a figurative way of saying that Satan has been defeated in his warfare. He is as thoroughly defeated as if he were cast down to the earth. In no way could this be more forcibly shown. His sphere of influence, his power to do evil, are limited and restrained. Care must be taken to guard our thoughts against believing that this is an actual expulsion from the holy heaven itself, as though he

had mingled with the godly and carried on a warfare therein. It is entirely a vision in which is shown the conquest of Satan by the conquering Christ, the fruit of his sacrificial work. **His angels** naturally followed with him. In the three following verses is given a song of praise for the victory thus gained. The triumph over Satan involves a complete salvation and the widening of God's kingdom. The agency by which Christianity wins its way in the world is made known, the power of Christ and his cross. The rage of Satan is thereby enkindled.

**10. Loud voice.** It is not stated by whom the voice is uttered; it is left in an indefinite way. It may fittingly be the expression of the elders, standing for those redeemed from the earth. The voice identifies the kinship of those yet struggling on the earth, **our brethren.** **Salvation,** rather, *the salvation.* The salvation is that full and final salvation the result of Christ's death and work (Heb. 9:27). **Power.** Jesus, at his exaltation, came into the possession of a universal sovereignty (Matt. 28:18). Christ's sovereignty is secured through his resurrection and the events subsequent to it. Jesus alludes to the casting out of the prince of this world, the stripping him of his power through his own death (John 12:31; 16:8, 11). **Accuser.** Jesus is our advocate before God, as in the Old Testament Michael stands for the interests of the chosen people against foreign foes. Satan is an enemy, doing the opposite of that which Jesus does. He is figuratively represented as slandering men to God continually. **Accused,** rather, *accuseth.* It is not meant that Satan is actually before God, bringing lying charges

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.

11 our God day and night. And they overcame him, because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not

e Rom. 8 : 33-39; 16 : 20; 1 John 2 : 13, 14. f 7 : 10-14.  
g 2 : 10, 13; 20 : 4; Luke 14 : 26; Acts 20 : 24; Heb. 11 : 35-38.

against the believer. This would be entirely too realistic a conception of heaven viewed as the dwelling-place of the holy. It is as if Satan presented before God false statements concerning believers, misjudging their motives, missating their lives, holding up their mistakes, magnifying their wrongs. Often the heart of the believer is troubled at the remembrance of wrongs done; the suggestion arises that the forgiveness of the sins may be impossible; it is just as though Satan were an advocate against us before God. Satan lies to men about God; he would, if it were possible, lie to God about men. But his power in all directions is limited through that Christ who is at God's right hand, carrying even yet a human nature that is akin to that of the redeemed on the earth. *Our*. This marks the relationship between the redeemed above and the redeemed on the earth. They are parts of one indivisible church.

Doctor Hovey suggests that the accusations made against Christians, charging them with licentious practices at the Lord's Supper, and bringing persecutions upon them through false statements, as that they were perverting the truth, all this done from a seemingly great love for the truth, made, as it were, before God, may explain the meaning here of bringing the accusation before God. It is certain, as Meyer says, that the Scriptures do not give us the doctrinal belief of a personal accusation of Satan before God, a belief just as incomprehensible to Christian thought as the idea of an actual abode of the devil and his angels in heaven.

**11.** The means by which the overcoming of Satan takes place are here portrayed. **They.** This refers to Michael and his angels, the forces of the redeemed on the earth who overcome Satan. They are accused by him, but they overcome him. The conflict takes place, therefore, not in some supernatural sphere, but on the earth,

among men. This is evident from the expression, **blood of the Lamb.** Jesus overcame Satan through his death, a seemingly utter defeat; but it was through his resurrection that Satan's power was brought to naught (Heb. 2 : 14). On account of Jesus' death, its removal of condemnation, its making a free access to God, the intercession above, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the ordering of life through God's guidance, all these are included in the statement. The Lamb won his victory over the dragon through the shedding of his blood. This is, at once, the prophecy, the symbol, and the cause of the like conquest over Satan by all believers. Faith in the Lamb makes one with the Lamb (1 John 5 : 4). **The word of their testimony** alludes to the witnessing on the part of the church. They openly witnessed for him, what he is, and what he had done for them. The gospel made known is the power of God to save men, to transform peoples, to regenerate society. The islands of the South Sea were full of cannibals, where truth was unknown, where savagery prevailed. In twenty years, in some islands, every family had household prayer, and the spirit of peace had come. The scattered church became a witnessing church. Christianity spread far and wide when believers gave their testimony for him (Acts 8 : 4). The Lamb and the witnessing church united can win a world from Satan, thereby overcoming him. The overcoming refers not only to the personal salvation of the believer, but to the organized triumph of Christ's cause on the earth. Christianity, as a whole, defeats the organization and agencies of evil. **Overcame** is in the past tense. The victory is looked upon as so assured that it is spoken of as already won, though the warfare may continue through centuries to come. The believer's conquest is assured, through the one conquest of Christ. **Loved . . . death**, rather, *they loved*

12 Therefore <sup>b</sup> rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.  
 1 Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!  
 For <sup>k</sup> the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath,  
 1 Because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

12 their life, even to death. For this cause rejoice, ye heavens, and they who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea! Because the Devil is gone down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a little season.

*h* 18 : 20; *Ps.* 96 : 11-13; *Isa.* 49 : 13.

*i* 8 : 13; 9 : 12; 11 : 10.

*k* 1 Peter 5 : 8.

*l* 10 : 6.

*not their life, even unto death.* This describes the character of those over-coming; it was not a calculating life, seeing how much might be safely hazarded for Christ. As Christ gave himself unreservedly to them, they, in turn, gave themselves to the uttermost to him. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. In Madagascar, when the missionaries had been driven away, and persecution raged, the churches increased in numbers and spirituality. It is more difficult for the church to maintain its power and spirituality in times when wealth and fashion and outward splendor influence it than when the jail and loss of property and torture confront it. It requires the spirit of martyrdom to witness for Christ, in a clear way, in times when the church is dressed in purple and fine linen.

12. This verse continues the words of the great voice (*ver. 10*). A twofold distinction is made—a rejoicing for a certain class, a woe for another class. **Rejoice . . . in them.** Satan is impotent as regards the disciples of Jesus who are faithful unto death. Over them Satan has no power; they are already dwelling, in spirit, with the ascended Christ, their head, in the heavens. They dwell already in heaven; their citizenship is there (*Phil. 3 : 20*). It has been said that Satan was cast out of heaven (*ver. 8*), meaning thereby that Satan has suffered defeat at the hands of Christ. It is as though he had fallen down to the earth. He is a defeated Satan, whose defeat is shown in this drama by a fall from heaven to earth. Therefore Christ, in heaven, is exempt from his assaults. Therefore his people, who are looked upon as in Christ, are regarded as exempt from his power, though they are exposed, while on the earth, to his temptations. The mastery of Satan is exercised over the ungodly. **Woe . . .**

**sea,** rather, *woe for the earth and the sea.* There is a contrast here between the heavens on the one hand, and the earth and the sea on the other. By the one is meant the redeemed, by the other the ungodly. Over them Satan exercises his control. In *ver. 9* Satan is called the deceiver of the inhabited world; here, where another term is used, he is represented as having power over the world of the ungodly. Earth and sea together make up the one entire world. Satan, taking possession of things earthly, will make use of the world-power thus gained to oppose and, if possible, overcome the kingdom of truth and righteousness. In *ver. 9* it is said that Satan was cast out of heaven. In this passage his voluntariness of action is looked at, he is **come down**, rather, *is gone down.* John stands on the upper place, the stage on which the drama takes place. The **great wrath** arises from his defeat at the hands of Christ by means of his resurrection, ascension, and the carrying on of his work even more effectively in the heavens. Defeated in one attempt, he transfers his energies to new methods of work. If he could not defeat Christ, perhaps he may defeat Christ's people. He is always full of wrath against Jesus and his people (*ver. 7*). In the ministry of Jesus we see Satan's renewed personal energy in the work of the demons of the New Testament. In the personal ministry of Christ this casting-down took place. Satan fell as from heaven to earth; the final downfall of his kingdom was assured. A casting-down takes place, in reality, all through the course of redemption. Every new triumph of Christ's cause, every new agency discovered, every new source of power used by the church, each of these is a casting-down of Satan from heaven to earth. **Short time.** The reason for the great wrath is intensified by this, his time is short. The 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. "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, \*that

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man-child. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the

m Ver. 5.

n Exod. 19 : 4.

o Ver. 6.

may not be limited to an absolutely short time just before the final advent of the Lord Jesus. Those who find the whole book coming to a close with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, find, of course, a really limited time. But as this theory is to be entirely discarded it is best to regard it as meaning a limited time. Even Satan realizes that his power is not boundless. He is limited on every side by God's restraining grace. The expression may also find a meaning in the relative shortness of all times in the earthly history even if centuries are embraced. A thousand years God looks upon as we look upon a day (<sup>2</sup> Peter 3 : 9). The vast periods of the creative week are spoken of as days. Satan knows that the coming of the Lord will mean the downfall of his kingdom. His power and malice are permitted for a time. Satan works through perversions of the truth, bodily passions, national pride, the love of things seen, the persecutions of the saints. He is in fearful earnestness. The same spirit should characterize the church in its resistance of Satan, in its defense and support of Christ's cause.

**13-17. THE FLIGHT OF THE WOMAN INTO THE WILDERNESS.** In this passage we have the woman alluded to in ver. 1 fleeing into the wilderness, where God supports her. Satan pursues her with his malice, trying in vain to destroy her. God surrounds her with his care, aiding her in her flight and protecting her.

**13. Dragon . . . earth.** This statement binds this passage with ver. 9. The New Testament describes Satan as full of wiles, plans, methods. The man-child, Jesus, is in the heavens, at God's right hand. He cannot, therefore, try to seduce or persecute him. But he may tempt his people, and thereby hurt his cause. Satan realized the hurt to his own cause from the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the final destruction of death and the putting down of sin, the ultimate crush-

ing of himself; a veritable casting-down of himself from the heaven to the earth. **Persecuted.** John the Baptist was beheaded; Stephen was stoned; the church was scattered; James was put to death with the sword; the course of the early church was marked by blood. Persecutions raged everywhere until A. D. 324, when the Roman empire became nominally Christian. All through the centuries the truth has been held down by violence. In Holland, in Switzerland, in Italy, in France and Spain, in England, God's saints have been hunted down and destroyed. The closing part of the nineteenth century witnessed persecutions from the Turk in Armenia, in Europe the savage treatment of the Stundists from Russia, in South America from the Romish Church, in England the social ostracism from the Established Church. **Woman.** This represents the church in its New Testament form, open to the gaze of men. When used at the first (ver. 1) the reference was mainly to the ideal church, the people of God in its Old Testament shape. Satan thought to crush it out in blood. Many distinct persecutions are marked out on the pages of church history. Satan's un wisdom is revealed in this, that persecutions can never kill the truth. It may separate the weak from the strong, it may cripple the power of the church, but it can never permanently injure the cause of Christ.

**14.** This verse presents the help given to the church by God. The woman is persecuted, but she is also protected. We learned in ver. 6 of the flight of the woman; here we learn of the fate of the woman. That she might flee quickly there were given unto her two wings of a great eagle, rather, *the great eagle*. The wings indicate the swiftness of escape. The eagle's wings indicate great strength and rapidity of flight. Allusion is made to the eagle's wings in 19 : 3, 4; Deut. 32 : 11, 12; to the protection

she might fly <sup>r</sup> into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished <sup>q</sup> for a time, and times, and half a time, 15 from the face of the serpent. And the serpent <sup>r</sup> cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of

*p* 17 : 3; 1 Sam. 23 : 14, 15; 1 Kings 19 : 4.

*q* 11 : 2; Dan. 7 : 25; 12 : 7.

*r* Isa. 59 : 19; Acts 8 : 1.

afforded by the wings in Ps. 36 : 7; Isa. 40 : 31. As a real work of art it would be grotesque to think of a woman supplied with an eagle's wings. But the Hebrew mind did not regard at all the artistic representation, but dwelt on the moral teaching involved, that God is granting to his people the means of rapid flight to a place or condition of safety. It is God who gave the wings.

**Wilderness.** The ancient people of God found a refuge, a place of safety in the wilderness after leaving the land of oppression. The term wilderness stands for the opposite of home, the settled life, comfort. It stands for an unsettled condition, discomfort, for suffering, a life burdensome, perhaps oppressed. The place of the church is not apart from men, Jesus forbids this (John 17 : 15). The monk and the nun are not the types of saint that Jesus makes for the salvation of the world. The church is to be in the world, but not of it. It is to be in the world, an unworldly church. Even while among men, dwelling in the crowded city, the church may be in the wilderness state, protected from being overthrown, yet suffering ills and persecutions. God keeps the dragon from crushing her. She is saved just as if she had fled into a wilderness from the dragon's power.

**Her place.** This is a place appointed by God, arranged in his providence for her. God does not cause persecutions, but he can overrule them for good, and can provide safety during their continuance. The church is safe, for her life is hid with Christ in God, but she is exposed to many ills before the life crowned with glory shall come. Canaan lies beyond the wilderness and Egypt. The church is nourished in the wilderness in like manner as the Israelites were fed with manna from heaven. That same God is the God of the church to-day. He nourishes by supplying inner grace, giving new power to the truth, guarding by his

wilderness, unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a river after the woman, that he might cause her to be car-

ried away of providences against too great severities, raising up friends, making even seeming ills work out eventual good. In the "Pilgrim's Progress" the fire is sustained by the oil poured in secretly, so that the water poured on cannot extinguish it; a symbol of God's strengthening help (Isa. 41 : 10). **Time . . . time.** We have again the frequently recurring number; twelve hundred and sixty days (11 : 3); forty-two months (11 : 2). This period of time, in a book of symbols, cannot be taken literally, nor can it be construed to mean twelve hundred and sixty years, or any definite time. Ever-recurring attempts have been made to fix the limit from which this is to be reckoned, and the limit at which it terminates. All attempts to do this have proved acknowledged failures. The expression is symbolic of the broken time of the persecution of God's people. All that is meant to be taught is that it is a period of tribulation indicated therefore, not by seven, the perfect number, but by half of that number. It is a prediction, not of a definite historical period, but it gives a general outline. They might know that, in a general way, the future for a long time to come would be one of tribulation, fulfilling the Saviour's words (John 16 : 33).

**15.** This verse has highly figurative expressions showing the hatred and wiles of Satan. **Serpent . . . woman,** rather, *serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river.* Many attempts have been made to find a literal historical meaning for this expression. Fifteen of these attempted solutions will be found in Meyer's commentary, such as that the reference is to the danger from the Turks, from the Saracens, the Arian heretics of the early centuries, from the irruption of the horde from the North at the fall of the Roman empire. It is not in accord with the spirit of the book to find such details portrayed. It is misleading, a

16 the flood. <sup>a</sup> 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, <sup>b</sup> and went to make war with

16 ried away by the river. And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of 17 his mouth. And the dragon grew angry at the woman; and he went

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. 4:18.

<sup>b</sup> 11:7; 13:7; Gen. 3:15; Dan. 7:23-26.

perversion of the aim of the book, to find minute details of church history recorded beforehand. The stream of water from the serpent's mouth no more designates anything actually occurring in the present or the future than the two wings given to the woman with which to escape indicate actual wings. John describes the danger from Satan to the woman under the highly figurative description of a river of water about to engulf her. The same poetical thought is contained in the Old Testament, and would be readily understood (Ps. 18:5-17; 32:6; 42:8; 124:4). Pressing dangers are here described under the figure of a flood of waters. It is not indicated under what form these perils would arise. The assaults of the ungodly, with their seductions, are often compared to a flood (Isa. 59:19). John sees in a vision a serpent casting a stream of water out of his mouth, pursuing the woman. To John it would be the acted teaching of Satan's every effort to crush and ruin the church. This teaching is exemplified in every age of the world, under changing forms.

16. This verse describes the aid rendered to the church, **the earth . . . mouth.** J. A. Smith holds the meaning to be that Christianity receives the benefit that comes from a settled order, the civilizations that ensue in time, so that the course of Christianity in the world is helped thereby; the earth, with its wealth, its power, becomes an ally of the cause of Christ. Milligan thinks that the term *earth* is used in a bad sense, meaning the world of the ungodly that favors a church that is conformed to it in nature. Swete says, "It is not easy to conjecture the exact meaning of the symbol here. But the general sense is clear. . . Help would arise from unexpected quarters." It is doubtful if any metaphorical meaning can be given to the term. If the danger to the woman were from

flood of waters, the only way in which safety could come would be from the disappearance of the water, its being swallowed up by the earth. In this way John sees the teaching in the sacred drama, the river disappears. In this way, by the earth opening its mouth, God vindicates his cause on the earth, swallowing the adversaries of Moses (Num. 16:30-32). Satan proposes, God disposes. Satan attacks in a way that seemingly will overwhelm the church; at that critical time God interposes his power. Sennacherib encamped about Jerusalem; in the morning one hundred and eighty-five thousand dead men were there. Here, in a figurative way, God opened the mouth of the earth, and the pursuing river was swallowed up. In 1588 the Spanish Armada came against England; the success of this meant for England the crushing out of Protestantism from the entire world. A storm came at an opportune time: the earth, in a figurative way, opened her mouth, and the waters disappeared. Every century will present illustrations of this truth.

17. The effect upon the dragon is noted. **Was wroth,** rather, *waxed wroth.* He had great wrath in ver. 12, he now waxes wroth with increasing bitterness. Satan is not so full of wickedness but that he may grow more wicked. There are almost no limits to the growth of both badness and goodness. Each new defeat angers him the more. Though the woman is represented as in the wilderness, and though the waters are kept from destroying her, yet she is exposed to Satan's persecutions. No figure of speech can be unduly pressed. The church, so far as her existence is concerned, is safe as if in a wilderness. But she is always in the world delivering her message, and hence is exposed to perils. The wilderness is not so much a place as a condition in which the church exists. **Went,** rather, *went*

the remnant of her seed, <sup>u</sup> which keep the commandments of God, and have <sup>x</sup> the testimony of Jesus Christ.

away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.

*u* 14 : 12.

*x* 1 : 2, 9; 6 : 9; 20 : 4; 1 Cor. 2 : 1; 1 John 5 : 10.

*away.* The members of the church are regarded as the seed, the offspring of the church begotten by it. Two kinds of members are recognized. The **remnant**, rather, the *rest, of her seed* are those who stand faithful to Christ and his truth in the integrity of their life and belief. These are further defined as those **who keep the commandments of God and have**, rather, *hold, the testimony of Jesus Christ*, rather, *Jesus*. The sad truth, brought out incidentally before, of a division in the church, a faithful and a faithless element, is here plainly noted (<sup>3</sup> : 4). To this verse belongs the first clause of chap. XIII, which both the Revised version and all the best MSS favor. **And . . . sea**, rather, *and he stood upon the sand of the sea*. The reference is to the dragon. We have the dragon already described as to its form, its nature, and its purpose. We now have his position identified. He stands on the seashore, where the land and the sea meet, that he may bring upon both the woe announced in ver. 12. In Dan. 7 : 2 the sea is declared to be full of tempests making its waters rage. Many interpreters take the *sea* to mean the restless mass of nations. It may have no special meaning, but may stand simply for one of the elements of which the earth is composed—land and sea. The dragon makes war, instigating it from his own malicious nature. How he excites the war, with what agencies he carries it on, this is revealed to us in the next chapter. This chapter opens with a resplendent vision of God's cause; it closes with the sight of the great and primal foe of God's cause, the dragon, clothed with great might, intelligence, and malice.

**VARYING INTERPRETATIONS.** Those who accept the early date of this book regard this chapter as fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem and the flight of the Christians beyond the Jordan. Barnes and others regard it as fulfilled in the triumph of Christianity in the Roman empire, making

of the dragon the persecuting empire. For a detailed list of the various meanings assigned to the dragon, the man-child, the woman's flight, the war in heaven, the two wings of the great eagle, the flood of water, the rest of her seed, see Weidner, p. 168.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The church is a glorious body, the bride of Christ, clothed with light. What the church is in God's sight, and in God's plan, it must strive to be in the actual life (ver. 1).

2. Bad men exist on the earth by sufferance. Back of bad men and bad influences is the personal presence and work of Satan. He has great power, but not unlimited power. One praying man, with God's help, can overcome him (ver. 3).

3. It requires a great struggle to live the Christian life aright. An evil heart within, the seductions of the world, a wily and powerful Satan are against the soul. Satan has a wonderful power, but Jesus is an almighty Saviour. The Lamb can overcome the dragon (ver. 3).

4. Sin and Satan are vile in their nature. A dragon, a fearful monster, fittingly represents them. All sin, when revealed to itself in the light of God's word, is an ugly thing (ver. 3).

5. Sin and Satan are destructive in their nature. They tear down, while God builds up. Satan destroyed Eden; he works disobedience in the heart, wretchedness in the world, fills up perdition (ver. 4).

6. Jesus is a tender shepherd for the penitent in spirit. He calls his sheep by name; he carries the lambs in his bosom. He lays down his life for the sheep. He will not suffer one to perish (ver. 5; Matt. 11 : 27-31).

7. Jesus is a ruling Saviour. He can denounce woes upon the ungodly. He will destroy his enemies, and consign to everlasting punishment his inveterate foes (ver. 5).

8. Elijah and Jesus were cared for in their wilderness hours. God never loses sight of his people. He can nourish in all ages by directing the outward life and by giving strength within (ver. 6).

9. There can be no concord between the good and the evil, between Christ and Satan, between the church and the world. Every Christian is the sworn foe of Satan, and all evil in thought, in word, in deed (ver. 7).

10. Jesus cast Satan out. His fall involves the fall of his followers and agencies. Every Christian must strive to make real, in his own life and age, that which was done in essence by Christ, the dethroning of Satan (ver. 9).

11. Heaven rejoices when Christ's cause is prospered. Every Christian should so help Christ, and so widen the kingdom that he may add to that joy (ver. 10).

12. Jesus needs the help of his people to make Christianity a conquering power on the earth. Their testimony must be added to the power of the cross. The church is to be, as it were, a present Christ in the world (ver. 11, 12).

13. God has not exempted his people from persecution, but he sustains them in it. The dragon seems, at times, to be stronger than God's cause. But as the dead Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, in like manner the cause of Jesus will triumph on the earth (ver. 13).

14. God preserved Noah when the flood came, he delivered Lot from Sodom, he fed Elijah in the wilderness. In like manner he sustains or delivers his people. God will keep his people, they must keep themselves (ver. 14).

15. In unthought-of ways Satan attacks God's people. But man's extremities are God's opportunities. God can make the Red Sea open, can interpose so that his own name shall be glorified. If the Lord were not our helper, we should utterly fail (ver. 15, 16).

16. Satan works through others, through men, books, pictures, customs, society, fashions, amusements, business. He is a master-mind in making war and utilizing agencies for his own purpose. But Jehovah reigns; he will laugh at his discomfited enemies (Ps. 2). Every Christian may say, "The Lord is my helper" (ver. 17).

## CHAPTER XIII

**THE SECOND AND THIRD ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH.** We have, in the preceding chapter, the first great foe of the church, the personal Satan. He is not simply the foe of the church, but he is the inspirer of other foes. He is a creator of evil and evil agencies. The dragon standing on the seashore may be considered as calling forth these two great enemies portrayed in this chapter. We have in this chapter the agencies by which Satan carries on his warfare against the truth. The great secular world-powers, the force of persecution that has sometimes caused the church almost entirely to disappear from the sight of men, the seduction of worldliness more potent than the fierceness of persecution, these are symbolized under the form of the second beast. There is in the Godhead a trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each one works through another, the Father through the Son, the Son through the Spirit. There is revealed in these two chapters an anti-trinity, Satan, the first beast, the second beast. These help each other and work through each other.

The first beast is described as composite in nature, satanic, with worldwide power, making war upon God's saints (ver. 1-10); the second beast appears, dragonlike in nature, serving the beast, working wonders, controlling business, the symbolic number, 666 (ver. 11-18). Irenaeus regarded the first beast as Antichrist, and the second beast as Antichrist's armour-bearer, the false prophet. Similarly Swete: "In the second beast we have a religious, as in the first a civil, power; he is a false prophet (16 : 23; 19 : 20; 20 : 10), who claims a spiritual power which he does not possess, and interprets the Divine will in the interest of the persecuting State. Some ancient interpreters saw in him the Christian ministry turned to unworthy uses. Such men may be in the background of St. John's thought, but the immediate reference is rather to the pagan priesthood of his own time." But see below where a broader and a far more reaching interpretation is preferred. See also on ver. 11. Contrast living creatures (4 : 6) with beasts,

*The two beasts, the agents of the dragon.*

**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

**13** AND he stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven

y Dan. 7: 2, 7, 8, 19-24.

z 12: 3; 17: 3, 9, 12.

#### 1-10. THE SECOND GREAT ENEMY OF THE CHURCH.

1. The first clause of this verse has been considered in connection with the last verse of the preceding chapter. There is here portrayed the appearance of the beast, with a description of his great power, his conquests, his opposition to God. *Saw a beast . . . blasphemy*, rather, *saw a beast coming out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy*. This term *beast* expresses, in the fullest sense, the fierce, savage, ugly, bestial nature of this creature. The highest holy beings may be fittingly described as living creatures (4: 6, R. V.), this is a beast. The creature that John sees is purely and distinctly animal in its entire nature. Its appearance is from the sea as that of the second is from the land. Some find in the expression, *sea*, a metaphorical sense, meaning thereby the mass of surging and restless Gentile nations as distinct from the Jewish nation represented by the land. It is doubtful whether the terms *sea* and *land* refer to anything but the teaching that Satan makes use of all the forces of the entire world to serve his purpose in making war upon God's holy cause. *Seven heads and ten horns*, rather, *ten horns and seven heads*. In the description of the dragon (12: 3), the order is first the head, then the horns. As this beast arises out of the sea, the horns would naturally be seen first, then the heads. Whether there is any reason, apart from this, why the order is changed we may not know. It is hazardous to find an express teaching in every minute detail, just as it is impossible to find a hidden meaning in every part of a parable. To portray such an animal as this on canvas would be to produce an utterly grotesque, monstrous, and unnatural figure. The Hebrew mind was intent only on the moral meaning conveyed, and was indifferent to the artistic effects. The

seven and the ten are frequently recurring numbers; both are combined here as also in the description of the dragon. The seven is everywhere a representation of completeness, denoting here that this fierce beast has all the powers that are needful to make of it a perfect beast of its kind, with all the agencies fitted for manifesting its character. Seven denotes a definite perfection for achieving the end of one's being, whether of the Lamb for his work (5: 6), or of Satan for his work (12: 5). The ten denotes also the same idea, having a special reference to what is worldly, relating to nations, rulers, and things in the physical and outward sphere. Three general lines of interpretation are held as to these symbols. The first regards them purely as symbols, expressing the idea of completeness. Under this theory no inquiry is made about any definite kings, kingdoms, or countries that are here symbolically represented. What John meant to describe was the general course of the world's organized governments as a foe mighty and bitter to God's cause and church on the earth. This theory has no place for dates, or distinct emperors and kingdoms. The second finds the meaning in some definite historical statements, in certain specific governments or persons who would be against God's cause. Meyer finds in the ten horns the first ten Roman emperors: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, and Titus; the seven heads referring to the seven emperors that had legitimate rule, excluding three who were regarded as usurpers, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Ewald refers the seven heads to seven Roman emperors; the ten horns to ten Roman prefects who governed the provinces. There is a very general agreement among interpreters of this class that the reference is to Rome in some form. Some refer it exclusively to pagan Rome, that is, to Rome before its professed conversion to Christianity, A. D.

horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blas-

heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and on his heads names of blas-

a 17:3; Dan. 7:25; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4.

324; others refer it to papal Rome; others include both under the one term of Rome, both pagan and papal. The third theory interprets the meaning to be mainly symbolical, but as finding illustration and reference to history, asserting that John had in mind at the time distinct historical allusions. The seven heads they explain to mean a definite completeness of power, but also allude to and include seven real and distinct kingdoms or persons. The seven heads refer to seven actual empires, or seven distinct forms of the Roman government assumed in successive periods of time, or to seven great world-powers, such as Milligan enumerates: the great persecuting powers of the past, the Egyptian, the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman powers, and some great power yet to be developed. Not all agree, however, in their list of powers; some separate the Median from the Persian, making the Roman power the seventh. The horns are located either one on each head, and a group of three between the heads of all placed on one head, representing thus one head as the head of the beast viewed as a distinct creature, the other six heads being regarded as secondary, subsidiary to the first. It is probable that all the horns were on one head, as manifesting in this manner the beast itself, as distinct from the separate heads. The seventh head, with its ten horns, on this view, would be the beast itself. On this matter no one can speak with authority; all is a subject of conjecture. The seven heads, taken in their entirety, express the complete world-power, not from the beginning of the world's history, for John is not looking at the entire course of God's cause in the earth from the first. He is concerned with the cause of Christ, its origin, its struggles, its conquests. It is the cause of redemption that lies as the central thought of this book. The Lamb is the central figure, the one who conquers at last. On his side are arrayed the holy Father, the angels, the saints on earth

and in heaven, the course and powers of providence. Against him are arrayed a personal Satan, with his bad agencies of bad angels, bad men, and the forces portrayed by the two beasts. The vision of John is concerned with that which has taken place since the advent of Christianity. We are not compelled, therefore, to select any seven distinct world-powers as though John were writing a church history either retrospectively or prophetically revealing the future. If the great world-powers, hostile to the cause of Christ, were less in number or greater in number than seven, it would make no difference in the symbolism. He is dealing with symbols of truths, not with arithmetical numbers. Three great antagonistic forces or threescore could either be fittingly represented by the symbolic seven. **Crowns**, rather, **diadems**. These are, as in the case of the dragon, symbols of sovereignty. In the case of the dragon (13:3) the diadems were upon the heads, not the horns. What difference in the meaning, if any, this indicates cannot be known. Variations in the minor details of this sacred drama may arise, not to express any divergence in the thought, but from a desire for a variety of representation. **Name of blasphemy**, rather, **names**. It is not made known what these names were. They were doubtless expressive of intense opposition to Christ, making false claims to sovereignty and worship. Jesus is represented as having upon himself the name, "King of kings" (19:16). The high priest had upon the forehead, "Holiness to the Lord" (Exod. 39:30). Christ's worshippers also had upon their foreheads the mark of Christ's ownership (2:17; 7:21; 14:1). Jesus alone has a right to absolute sovereignty and worship. Anything denying these claims, or making false claims, on the part of the world-powers, would be an act of blasphemy. One name, perhaps, was found on each head. In the Bible the name stands for and reveals the character. In this case the inner nature

<sup>2</sup> phemy. <sup>b</sup> 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 <sup>c</sup> the dragon <sup>d</sup> gave him his power, <sup>e</sup> and his <sup>3</sup> seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads <sup>f</sup> as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed.

<sup>b</sup> Dan. 7: 4-7.

<sup>c</sup> 12: 9.

<sup>d</sup> 17: 12.

2 phemy; and the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet as of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion, and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great <sup>3</sup> authority; and [I saw] one of his heads as it were smitten to death. And his death-stroke was healed; and all the earth wondered after the beast.

<sup>e</sup> 16: 10.

<sup>f</sup> Ver. 12, 14; 17: 10.

stood expressed in the outward life, an open and avowed antagonism to Christ.

**2.** This verse describes the beast more particularly. The foundation for this description is found in Dan. 7: 16. In Daniel's description four beasts arise out of the sea, having respectively the form of the lion, the bear, the leopard, and a fourth beast not definitely described, having ten horns. These represent four kingdoms to arise, hostile to God, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Median, the Grecian, or in a differing combination the Medo-Persian and the Roman. Daniel individualizes the hostile powers; John combines them into one beast, having the distinctive features of each of Daniel's beasts. The qualities represented are cruelty and rapacity; the swift and cruel movements of the leopard, the dull but savage motions of the bear, the mastering cruelty of the lion. To this beast the dragon gives his power, making it his vicegerent, his main agency in the world. He bestows upon him three things, his power, his throne, his right to use the power and the throne. **Power.** Satan offered to Jesus his great power (Matt. 4: 9), but Jesus refused. Satan now proposes to make use of worldly agencies to do his will. He, therefore, bestows upon it his power—great, malignant, personal. In the Scriptures Satan is not a figure of speech, but a real power in the world. Jesus is represented by the woman, pure, tender, lovely (12: 6); Satan is represented by the wild beast. This power is exhibited in its control over life and freedom (ver. 11); over the business of men (ver. 17). **Seat,** rather, **throne.** Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4: 4); a prince of this world (John 14: 30). **Authority.** Here is conferred the right to use his power for carrying out the will of the dragon.

In the wide realm of nations, of worldly power, of man's beliefs, Satan works through the beast. This beast has, as it were, a throne and great power. How John sees the transfer made we are not informed; it may have been done in a symbolic way. This beast, seven-headed, ten-horned, and crowned, uses its power to suppress the rising and spread of the truth whereby Jesus would get hold of the world, for this would take it out of the grasp of Satan and make the world Christ's kingdom. Satan has always inspired the world's kingdoms to a hatred of God's cause. Jesus spoke of the hostility that would arise against his followers (John 16: 2).

**3.** This verse describes a wound received by the beast, and its subsequent recovery. **Wounded unto death,** rather, *smitten*. The word rendered smitten means, in reality, slain or slaughtered. It is a word used eight times in this book, and is elsewhere always rendered slain. It must be so understood in this passage. (Comp. the same word in 5: 6.) One of the heads had been killed, but had lived again through the healing of the wound. Various interpretations are given. Many refer this to the Emperor Nero, the fifth emperor, who, according to a rumor in the early centuries, had disappeared, but would, in time, reappear and enter on his old life of cruelty. By a comparison with 17: 10, it is stated that Nero had fallen at the time of the writing of the Apocalypse. **Wondered.** This word means more than it asserts; it means a following after, while at the same time amazement fills the mind. External power, the splendor of government, the promises of success, these attract men and hold their hearts. The mind is being blinded, led captive by Satan to do his will. John elsewhere describes the

**4** And <sup>a</sup> all the world wondered after the beast. And <sup>b</sup> they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, **5** saying, <sup>c</sup> Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him <sup>d</sup> a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue <sup>e</sup> forty and two months.

*g* 17:8; 2 Thess. 2:9-12.

*h* 2 Thess. 2:4.

*i* Isa. 40:25.

*k* Dan. 7:8, 25; 11:36.

*l* 11:2, 3; 12:6.

real condition of the world as darkness (*1 John 5:19*).

**4. Worshipped.** There is no avowedly devil worship among men. Men do not avowedly bow down before Satan and do him homage. But caring for those things which Satan suggests and devises among men to defeat God's purposes, this is, in reality, to be a worshiper of Satan. God is a jealous God, desiring his will to be supremely followed. **Dragon which gave,** rather, *dragon because he gave*. **Who is like unto the beast?** These words seem a kind of mocking parody upon the words of praise rendered in many Old Testament passages (*Isa. 40:25*; *44:7*; *Ps. 35:10*; *Micah 7:8*). The power of Satan entrenched in the thrones of kingdoms, in the policies of men, in the power of wealth, in the attractions of society, in customs that had in them the power of centuries, these things seemed invincible and invulnerable. Who could cope with such a power? The twelve humble men associated with Jesus, himself an inhabitant of an obscure village, can do nothing seemingly to overthrow the organized supremacy of Satan. The one hundred and twenty, meeting in an upper room (*Acts 1:13*) with a crucified Nazarene as their sovereign Lord, with unattractive and repulsive teachings as their cardinal utterances, the sinfulness of the heart, the necessity of the new heart, the utter subjection to a holy Christ, an eternal banishment from God as the penalty for unforgiven sin—with such teachings it seemed as though they could never succeed. They could not succeed in a world where the beast held sway had it not been for God's indwelling power. There is a plain contrast here between the beast and the Lamb. Both alike are sent, the one by the Father, the

**4** And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast, and who is able to make war with him? And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and authority was given him to work forty-

other by Satan; both have authority given to them; both have a death and a resurrection (*ver. 3*); both are followed by a great multitude of worshipers; both have a sway not limited by natural boundaries. The beast is that portraiture of the world spoken of by the Saviour in John 17:15, 16.

**5.** This verse finds a foundation in Dan. 7:8. The world-power under the influence of the dragon's spirit speaks in a boastful and irreverent way. Assyria blasphemed God in making claims that in reality denied God's sovereignty (*Isa. 37:23*). The Roman emperors blasphemed God in claiming a universal dominion, in giving divine names to the city, to the emperor, to the empire. The beast makes great pretensions. This takes place practically to-day, when the civil powers arrogate to themselves authority over the conscience, occupying the place that the Scriptures and the conscience alone should occupy. **Forty-two months.** This expression has already been found in 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14. The expression is always an indication of disaster, of a time of sorrow for the church, a time of seeming success for Satan's power and reign. It is the broken and incomplete period of time in which Satan holds sway. By its very form, the half of the perfect symbol, seven, it shows that the triumph of the beast will not be complete and enduring. It is reserved for Jesus, the rightful Lord, to reign in triumph forever, to resume his rightful authority as representing God (11:17). **Continue.** It is implied by this term that a limit comes to his power among men. Satan and all his power are to be restrained and ultimately destroyed. It is not to be understood that God is helpless in the presence of the beast, or that he cannot destroy or control it. God permits

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, <sup>m</sup> and his tabernacle, <sup>n</sup> and them that 7 dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him <sup>o</sup> to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; <sup>p</sup> and power was given him over all kindreds, and 8 tongues, and nations. <sup>q</sup> And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship

6 two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, <sup>n</sup> those who tabernacle in heaven. And it was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. <sup>8</sup> And all who dwell on the earth will

*m* 21:8; *John* 1:14; *Col.* 1:19; 2:9; *Heb.* 9:11.

*n* *Heb.* 12:22, 23.

*o* 11:7; 12:17; *Dan.* 7:21, 25.

*p* 11:18; 17:15.

*q* *1 John* 5:19.

evil to have large sway in its development, in revealing its true nature and its unwisdom. In time the beast will be destroyed (*19:20*).

6. This verse further explains the preceding. **Opened his mouth.** This has reference to a full and formal reproach against God; it is distinct from a merely casual blasphemy. **Blasphemy**, rather, *blasphemies*. **Name.** This refers to the person of God, represented by his name. He attacks God by assuming a power and authority that rightfully belong to God only. He utters a twofold blasphemy against God and his home, which really is his people. **Tabernacle . . . heaven**, rather, *tabernacle, even them that dwell in heaven*. God's dwelling-place is really in his people, they constitute his tabernacle. Paul declares that the people of Christ make the real temple (*1 Cor. 3:16*). Heaven, as the assumed especial dwelling-place of God, is not looked up to in prayer and reverence. God's saints on the earth are misrepresented and abused, they are described as those neglecting their best interests here for the sake of a God and a future life that no one living has seen. *Heaven*. The reference may not be to angels so much as to Christ's people dwelling in the unseen life, who are looked upon as having thrown away their lives by neglecting the pleasures and gains of the present life. A saintly life is regarded as foolish and unreasonable by men whose portion is in this life. In this way Moses, Joseph, and Jndson were looked upon as throwing away their lives. Satan will accomplish his ends if he can produce a dislike for God and the holy life.

7. **Given unto him.** To Jesus was given all authority by the Father (*Matt. 28:18*). Here the given means

more than the permission by God; it is given by the dragon who, in great malice, reigns over the world. He persecuted the woman (*12:13*). This power is now transferred to the beast as the representative of the dragon. How often and how savagely the governments of the earth have made war upon and seemingly crushed the saints! In the Middle Ages among the Waldenses, in Jndson's prison pen at Ava, in many smaller and unnoticed ways to-day, God's holy ones are outwardly overcome. **Power**, rather, *authority*. A fourth time in this passage (*ver. 5-7*) the term *given* is employed. In every case the reference is to the dragon who acts as a king among men in opposition to God. **Kindreds . . . nations**, rather, *tribe, people, tongue, and nation*. This fourfold description denotes the world-wide and universal character of his reign. It is evident that the allusion cannot be to Rome or to any distinct historical power; the terms are too wide-reaching for such a representation. The beast of despotism, unhindered by considerations of love or mercy, oppressive to body and free thought, opposed to piety and the spiritual life, is everywhere an ally of Satan. The *given* must be interpreted of Satan conferring his power, as a real Antichrist, upon the beast. In the empires of antiquity, in the vast Roman empire, in the larger part of the world to-day, men must conform their innermost beliefs, not to the revealed will of God, but to certain outward standards and tests, under penalties. The Stundists in Russia and the Christians in Armenia suffer from the beast.

8. This verse reveals the world's worship of the beast spoken of in ver.

3. The ungodly are described under the expression, **dwell upon the earth**. The godly are described in

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. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the

worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb who is slain from the foundation of the world. If any one has an ear, let him hear. If any one is for captivity, into captivity he goes; if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is

r 3 : 5; 21 : 27; Exod. 32 : 32; Dan. 12 : 1; Phil. 4 : 3.      s 17 : 8; 1 Peter 1 : 19, 20.  
t 2 : 7; Matt. 11 : 15.      u Isa. 14 : 2; 33 : 1.      x Gen. 9 : 6; Matt. 26 : 52.

the words *tabernacle in the heaven* (ver. 6). There is a wide contrast between the two. There is never a time when there are no godly people on the earth, there is always a remnant worshiping God (12 : 17). They have been spoken of before under the terms of the two witnesses (11 : 3); under the figure of the inner court and the true worshiper (11 : 1). Those living the true life are those belonging to the Lamb; they bear a personal relation to him; on account of their relation to Jesus they have eternal life through him; their names are enrolled in a book, written as it were; it is through the sacrifice of the Lamb that their names have been enrolled and they have been kept in safety. **Slain.** It was the purpose of God from eternity that Jesus should be an offering for sin, from the foundation of the world. Because it was in God's mind that Jesus should be a slain Lamb for the sins of men, all who believed in God before the advent of Jesus were saved for his sake. He is a Saviour whose merits and saving power extend through all the ages, both before and after the coming of Christ (Heb. 9 : 15). He is the eternally slain Lamb. Those enrolled in the book of life are kept from the delusions of Satan, are kept from the false worship. Nothing can harm the man whose life is hid with Christ in God; the outward life may be destroyed, but the man himself will be preserved in safety. There is a keeping power on the part of God (John 17 : 11); there must be watchfulness on the part of the disciple (John 10 : 5). The moral life of the world centers about two poles, the worship of the true God and the worship of Satan. The knowledge of the one brings eternal life; the only heaven of the other is a hell. The Lamb passed through persecutions here to the glory at God's right hand, and has

in charge the book of eternal life. In like manner the followers of the Lamb may be slain, but in the end they will, like their Redeemer, be safely housed in the upper tabernacle. Their present oppressor will be cast into the lake of fire (20 : 10). The passage is strongly helpful and consolatory to the struggling child of God. At the close of the vision, or visible parable, of the first beast occurs a note of warning and counsel (ver. 9, 10).

9. Frequently in the earthly ministry of Jesus attention was called, in this way, to some difficult thought (Matt. 13 : 9). The same method is employed by the ascended Jesus at the close of each of the messages to the churches (chap. 11, III). There are times when special attention is needed to understand the message sent from God. The succeeding passage will have in it some weighty thought, having special reference to their condition.

10. **He . . . captivity**, rather, *If any one is for captivity, into captivity he goeth.* Two interpretations are possible. It may be a word of comfort to the tortured believer that, in time, God's retributive power will be manifest in giving to the men who now send God's saints into captivity a like punishment, a captivity fearful and unending. A better interpretation is the following: the Christian must submit cheerfully to the sorrows and disappointments of the present evil state. If any one is set apart, destined, in God's permissive providence, and in Satan's purposing, to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. **He . . . killed**, rather, *if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword shall he be killed.* This is an exhortation to suffer even death patiently, knowing that, in time, God will reward with a righteous judgment the men persecuting Christ's people. It is an appeal to

sword. <sup>y</sup> Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast <sup>z</sup> coming up out of the earth; <sup>x</sup> and he had two

<sup>y</sup> 14:12; Isa. 30:15; Lam. 3:26; Hab. 2:3; Luke 12:32; Heb. 3:6; James 5:7, 8.

<sup>x</sup> 11:7. <sup>a</sup> Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two

God's people to conquer by patience, by longsuffering, by self-restraint. There is, of course, a time when God's people may rightfully resist both oppressive civil power and also oppression on the rights of conscience. But the general spirit of the Christian world must be to win a way for Christ in the world by humility, longsuffering, and godly living. There is a call for **patience** which means the steadfast standing up under constant persecution, a patience kept alive and made strong only by a **faith** in a living Christ. There is a victory that comes through faith (<sup>1</sup> John 5:4). Days of persecution have often been times of refreshing from the Lord, times of enlargement for the church, of the refining of the Christian character, and the means of winning tribute from the world itself. The Lamb will, in the end, overcome the dragon and the beast; the cross will do more than the seven heads and ten horns. We have now seen the great enemy of Christ, the dragon; the second great enemy of Christ, the first beast coming out of the sea, clothed with Satan's power, sitting on his throne, wielding his scepter. In the rapid unfolding of the foes of the church, the third great enemy is now to appear.

**11-18. THE SECOND BEAST EMERGING FROM THE LAND.** We have a threefold opposition to the Redeemer and his cause: a dragon (12:3); a beast arising from the sea (ver. 1); a beast issuing from the land (ver. 11). The pathway to a triumph of the Redeemer's cause is beset by all possible oppositions. In the life of the Saviour there was a constant temptation by Satan himself (Luke 4:13). There was also a strong popular hatred, the opposition of the leaders of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the mighty power of the Roman authorities. What took place in Christ's life is repeated, in all ages, against the Redeemer's church. The first beast is openly a fierce and aggressive enemy, persecuting the

woman. The second beast, an ally of the first, is far different, more specious, less open, but none the less satanic. If Satan cannot gain his ends by open and fierce hostility, if he cannot crush the church in bloodshed, he may gain his ends by false methods, by deception. This is the method about to be revealed.

**11. And I beheld another beast,** rather, *saw*. It is a beast in the full meaning of that term, implying that it is savage, bestial in nature. The four creatures representing the highest intelligences, are called in the Revised version living creatures, endowed with the highest forms of life; the opponents of God are utterly different, and can be symbolized only by beasts. It is *another* beast, like the first beast in its nature, its aim, characterized by the same spirit. In its inner nature it is not a lamb, which stands as a symbol of Christ; not a woman pure, clothed in white, representing the church, but a beast. In Daniel the beasts represent the great world-powers that would arise one after the other (<sup>Dan.</sup> 7). The source of this beast is from the **earth**; in like manner the first beast sprang from the sea (ver. 1). It is contended by some that the sea represents the great mass of ungodly, Gentile nations; that the **earth**, therefore, stands for the Jewish nation, God's prophetic and priestly people. On this view, the beast is a religious rather than a secular enemy. It is doubtful whether this interpretation is valid; it is more likely that the two terms, sea and earth, are introduced as denoting the entire world as made use of by Satan to fight against God's cause. There may also be the implied teaching that the source of Satan's opposition is earthly in its origin; his agencies are all earth-born. Jesus is from heaven, his foes are of the earth (<sup>John</sup> 8:28). The woman, the bride of Christ, appears in the skies; the foes of the church are earth-born, opposite in their origin as in their nature from

horns like a lamb, and <sup>b</sup> he spake as a | horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a

<sup>b</sup> Dan. 11 : 21, 24.

all that belongs to Christ and his church. Some have inferred that inasmuch as the sea is the image of restlessness, and the earth the symbol of a settled order and stability, that it is here taught that the second beast comes into being in a time of settled order; a time of stability that comes from centuries of civilization, in a time far later than the first. It is true that, in order of time, the second beast appears after the first, succeeding it in time and subordinate to it in action; but this may not be inferred from the terms here used. The appearance of the beast is described, also its nature. The two do not correspond in their outward symbolism. It has **two horns like a lamb**. We are not to infer that because it has only two horns it, therefore, has less power than the first beast, which had ten horns. Nor is it taught by this symbolism that it has less power than the Redeemer, the Lamb with seven horns (5 : 6). Intended to represent before men, in a deceptive way, a lamblike nature and address, the beast naturally has an outward appearance to correspond with this purpose. The number *two* itself may be symbolical, as were the two witnesses in 11 : 3. The two witnesses stood for all the witnessing forces of the Redeemer upon the earth; in like manner here as this beast speaks, witnesses for the first beast, the two horns may represent all those who sympathize with this teaching and help the beast in its witnessing. It is a beast with lamblike horns, intended to create the impression upon the minds of men that it is lamblike in its nature, harmless, gentle, with no hint of persecution or harm to the church. Its two horns are two lies. In its external appearance the first beast is openly anti-christian; in its external appearance the second beast is not openly anti-christian, but is seen to be really such when its character is made apparent. By its speech it gives indication of what it is. It is therefore a speaking, reasoning, witnessing creature; a symbol of human thought, human teaching prophesying in all forms. The

first beast represents force, world-wide power; this represents intelligence, reason; it **speaks**. From this beast come perverted religious teachings, corrupt doctrines, heresies, false views of God and man. Some false teachings have wrought more havoc to the church and the truth than the most violent persecutions. The speech reveals the character, the dragon within (Matt. 12 : 37). There is a wide contrast between the seeming appearance and the inner reality, between the lamb and the dragon. There is hypocrisy united with the savage spirit, more to be dreaded than the first beast, which was openly in the service of Satan. The devil is most to be feared when he comes dressed in white (2 Cor. 11 : 14). The two lamblike horns are the assertion, on its part, that its power will be used in a gentle way, suited to a peaceful, settled state of things. The first and second beasts are alike: (1) In their hostility to God and his cause, inasmuch as both are declared to be beasts. (2) They are seemingly unlike in their origin, the one springing from the sea, the other from the land; but both alike arising from the world, the opposite of heaven; both alike worldly in origin and spirit. (3) They are both satanic in character and conduct. The first beast is subservient to the dragon, the second beast is subservient to the first beast. The god of both is the dragon. They are unlike in two respects: (1) As to appearance one is entirely beast-like; the other is apparently lamb-like, both having the beast nature. (2) As to methods of working, the second beast is persuasive, reasoning, using influence to induce men to worship the first beast. It is not persecution that is made use of, but persuasion. It is not meant that in his teaching he said that he was a servant of the dragon; this would be to defeat his purpose. But his teaching was essentially anti-christian in its spirit, and tended, therefore, to build up Satan's kingdom. A sermon, if opposed to the teaching of Christ, addressed to a Christian assembly, may do more harm than an openly announced atheistic

12 dragon. And he exerciseth all the power <sup>of</sup> the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, 13 whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven

12 dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight, and causes the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first beast, 13 whose death-stroke was healed. And he does great signs, so that he makes fire even come down out of heaven on

c Ver. 1-8.

d 16 : 14; Deut. 13 : 1-3.

e 1 Kings 18 : 38; 2 Kings 1 : 10, 12.

discourse. Under the cover of the lamb's appearance there is the dragon's utterance; it has thus opportunity to do the greater harm. Satan is full of wiles.

**12.** Having seen the form and nature of the second beast, we now see the putting forth of his power. **Exerciseth . . . power**, rather, *authority*. The two beasts do not follow each other in such a manner that one disappears when the other comes on the stage of vision. In vision John sees both beasts at the same time. They work conjointly; they have the same aim and spirit. It has its own function as teacher, it acts as a prophet of and for the world; this is its special work as distinct from the first beast. Then, in addition to this, it exercises the power of the first beast using the world-powers for compulsion, for persecution. The lamblike, two-horned beast becomes, in its effects, the ten-horned beast. **Before him**. This means in the presence of the first beast, in his sight. Everything about the second beast is a kind of mockery of divine things. It is "before God" that the Son, the Holy Spirit, the angels, the saved in heaven, stand and serve (1 : 4; 3 : 5; 7 : 15). The second beast exercises authority in the presence of the first, for the sake of the first, with power conferred by the first. It is his delight to serve the first beast, to do his will. He is a kind of god to the second beast. The effect of his authority is seen in this: **He causeth . . . beast**, rather, *maketh*. In ver. 4 we see all the world worshipping the beast and ascribing praise to him. Here we have that world-wide worship, to some extent, explained. It is through the influence of this beast that that homage is rendered. Whatever the speech may be (ver. 11), whether it be unsound and perverted teaching as to religious truth, or the teachings of science, culture, and false philosophy, "the science falsely so-called"

(<sup>2</sup> Tim. 6 : 20); whatever the teaching be, this beast persuades men to follow the first beast, follow the principles and power of worldliness, materialism, the unspiritual life. The beast is essentially worldly. **Earth . . . dwell therein**. The allusion is to the worldly minded people; those whose home is on the earth; men who do not live in an upward and heavenly way. There are some who are true to God; these have their dwelling-place in God's tabernacle (ver. 6).

**13.** This verse gives one method of his persuasive power. **Wonders**, rather, *signs*. The word rendered *signs* is commonly used in the New Testament for the wonderful works of Christ. John sees this in vision. Inasmuch as it is seen in vision, there is no proof that the appearance indicates a real miracle. They appear to be real to the sight, and are therefore spoken of in this way. As the beast is called in the next verse a deceiver, it is altogether probable that the signs here spoken of are deceptive in their appearance, and are, in reality, lying wonders. Statements are elsewhere made that Satan has great power to present false signs and deceptive manifestations (<sup>2</sup> Thess. 2 : 9; Matt. 24 : 24). The sign here spoken of is an imitation of the miracle found in 2 Kings 1 : 10-12, the calling of fire down from heaven. **Maketh . . . heaven**, rather, *even makes fire to come down out of heaven*. In many ages parties have claimed to work miracles in support of false beliefs. The second beast seemingly claims a wonderful sanctity and power with God, asserting its ability to make nature bear testimony to the truth of its teachings. It claims to be a prophet. Those who regard the second beast as the symbol of the world's culture, deifying nature and humanity, make these signs refer to great achievements in nature, and its lofty pretensions seeming to rival the real witnesses of God's

14 on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them <sup>a</sup>that dwell on the earth <sup>b</sup>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 <sup>c</sup>an image to the beast, which had the 15 wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, <sup>d</sup>and

14 the earth, in the sight of men; and he leads astray those who dwell on the earth, because of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to those who dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to <sup>e</sup>the beast, which has the 15 stroke of the sword, and lived. And it was given him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause

f 12 : 9; 19 : 20.

g Ver. 8.

h 2 Thess. 2 : 9, 10.

i 14 : 9, 11; 15 : 2.

k 16 : 2; 19 : 20; 20 : 4: Dan. 3 : 7.

truth and the expression of his will to men.

**14.** His appearance is deceptive, having the lamb appearance and the dragon nature. It is not wonderful that he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth. The very essence of Satan and sin is deception. It has been so from the first (Gen. 3 : 5, 7). Satan is, by nature, a liar (John 8 : 44). There is false teaching on the part of those represented by the beast (Matt. 24 : 24). Jesus Christ is the truth, his words will not fail when men trust in them and build on them (Mark 13 : 31). The means of this deception are indicated: by the means . . . beast, rather, by reason of the signs which it was given to him to do in the sight of the beast. These signs are not to be regarded as signs at all comparable with those wrought by Jesus in confirmation of his own Sonship and the truth of his declarations, but rather deceptive appearances, a mocking likeness of the true signs. Jesus brought life and immortality to light through his resurrection; spiritualism, with its seeming wonders in defense of another life, has in reality drawn men away from Christ and the Scriptures. **Giveth.** This refers to his acting as a deputy of the first beast, who himself is a deputy of Satan. There is a permission from God even to this false beast, but the allusion here is to the imparting of power by Satan. God permits even when he does not approve. Satan grants power and approves of wickedness. There is given here a specific illustration of his deceptive teaching. **Saying . . . dwell on earth,** referring to the worldly minded people of the earth. **Make an image to the beast.** Some find in the term image a historical reference to the

image of the Cæsar, the Roman emperor, which men were compelled to worship. This is Alford's view. Before this image Christian martyrs were brought to the test, and put to death if they refused to perform acts of worship. Satan is the direct antithesis of Jesus—the embodiment and incarnation of the principle of evil. The first beast represents Satan, receives his power. The image of the first beast, the ungodly world-power, is the embodiment, as if it were a living thing, of the spirit of the first beast. The false prophet, whether church and priesthood, or learning and culture, teaches that men should worship and serve the spirit of this world. That which the Saviour denominated by the term world (John 16 : 33); that against which Paul urged Christians to be on their guard (Rom. 12 : 2); the great secular world-power, finding its completest representation in the outward forms of national life, may be served as if it were a god. The expression, *image of the beast*, occurs no less than ten times in the book of Revelation (13 : 14, 15) three times; (14 : 9, 10; 15 : 2; 16 : 2; 19 : 20; 20 : 4).

**15.** This verse further describes the power of the second beast. The preceding verse mentions the image of the first beast made by the dwellers on the earth. **Had power . . . speak,** rather, was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak. Alford interprets as follows: "The allusion probably is to some lying wonders permitted to the pagan priests to try the faith of God's people. We cannot help, as we read, thinking of the moving images and winking and speaking pictures so often employed for the purpose of imposture by their far less

cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,<sup>1</sup> to receive a mark in their right

that as many as worship not the image of the beast be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or on their fore-

*14:9-11; 19:20; 20:4.*

excusable papal successors.” But it is impossible to limit the meaning to this, for these images have no power to put faithful Christians to death for disobedience. The first beast is the symbol of the ungodly world-power arrayed against God. The image of the beast is this power personified, incarnate, as it were, in a living person. The image here made to speak may be regarded as the persecuting power of the civil government, compelling persons to act in accord with the teachings of the second beast, the false prophet. *Speak.* Articulate speech is the sign of intelligence and reason. The ungodly world-powers, represented by kings and emperors and ungodly rulers, give utterance against God’s people and give pretexts for persecution. We might find many illustrations of this in the first centuries. The man was in danger of death who did not pay divine honor to the emperor. For that age, the emperor might be regarded as the image of the first beast, the seven-headed monster. **Killed.** This may refer to actual death suffered by the followers of Christ at the hands of the image of the beast. There was persecution by the first beast, instigated by Satan’s malice. There is persecution now through the second beast, the false prophet, the seemingly religious organization. Fairbairn refers the *killed*, not to a literal destruction, but to the experience of a social and political destruction, a civil martyrdom. There will be a destruction so far as the personal influence and the development of personal power are concerned, a real death and burial. In India a rigid caste system surrounds a man; in like manner everywhere the social system may be so arrayed against the Christian that he may live in society and yet be, as it were, dead. There is no reason, however, why the severest meaning may not be given to the term. Jesus speaks of a martyrdom that will come from the asserted desire to please God

on the part of the persecutor (*John 16:2*).

**16.** This verse shows the spirit of evil, the power of the first beast, ruling over men in all the departments of life. It is the instigation of the second beast that suggests to the first beast the placing of the mark on men, and, at the same time, persuades and deceives men that they receive the mark. **Receive . . . mark,** rather, *that there be given them a mark.* In *7:3* God’s servants were represented as marked with a seal of God for their own protection. This is not to be regarded as a literal marking, but means that they were as if marked, so that their preservation would be assured. This mark is the opposite of that. It is the mark of ownership on the one hand; the mark of willingness of service on the other hand. It is not impressed as a brand on an unwilling captive, but it is received in willing subjection. Slaves were branded to indicate their servile condition. Compare Paul’s words in *Gal. 6:17*, regarding himself as the slave of Christ. The mark is **on their right hand;** that part of the body which stands for business energy, the social life. The right hand is a man’s chief executive agency. Satan gets hold of a man’s business and social life. **In their foreheads.** This is that part of the body which reveals character, which manifests the man himself. It is a mark on the outside of the life, so that it cannot be hidden. By reference to *14:1* it will be seen that the Father’s name is marked upon the redeemed. By contrast we would suppose that the mark of the beast, his name or number, will be upon the ungodly. No man can serve two masters; in God’s sight, and in one’s real character, men must be in alliance with God and in subjection to God or ungodliness. The varied classes enumerated, expressive of the ranks of men in life, show how widespread is the deceptive power of the second beast; all

17 hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or <sup>m</sup>the name of the beast, <sup>n</sup>or the number of his name.

18 <sup>o</sup>Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count <sup>p</sup>the number of the beast: <sup>q</sup>for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

*m* 14:11; 17:5.

*n* 15:2.

*p* 15:2.

17 head; and that no one should be able to buy or sell, but he that has the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

*o* 17:9; *Ps.* 107:43; *Dan.* 12:10.

*q* 21:17.

of these classes belong to the worldly minded; there are those, the heavenly minded, not embraced in these lists. The Scriptures everywhere teach that there is a great gulf between the godly and the ungodly. But since Christianity has so largely leavened the masses of men, even of those who are not Christians, it is more difficult than in early days to draw the dividing line between men, so that the difference is at once distinguishable. But there is a difference among men, both God and Satan recognize their own.

17. This verse shows the result of the mark of the beast. The one not so marked would be consigned to a living death, cut off from business relations and social intercourse with others. It is the prophecy of a religious boycott. **Mark, or the name,** rather, *mark, even the name.* Historical illustrations are numerous of emperors and popes putting their ban upon an entire nation, forbidding the ringing of the church bell, the burial in holy ground, the solemnization of marriage until there had been a return to the allegiance to authorities and the profession of the faith. It was a fearful power in the Middle Ages; the forbidding of social and business intercourse with one charged with heresy. The civil powers, at the request of the church, have exercised the dread instrument of the interdict, forbidding in this manner the buying from a heretic or selling to a heretic. God's faithful people, through many ages, in many countries, were thus hindered in their religious life, their business was crushed; while the weak in heart were forced to affirm with their lips what they did not believe with their heart. In the year 1897, in China, a conspiracy, embracing thousands of people, was formed,

pledged to have no dealings with the native Christians. It often happens to-day in Christian countries that avenues to success are closed against men, in certain directions, unless they have upon them the mark of the beast, a worldly spirit of obedience to Satan and his will. Jesus has made provision for men who suffer loss of all things for conscience' sake; who walk in the narrow way even when it leads to death (*Matt.* 10:28; 19:29).

18. This verse has proved to be the most puzzling of any passage in the Apocalypse. Many attempted solutions have been given of it. It is conceded by all that the beast referred to is the first beast, not the second. It is conceded that the solution of this problem, the right interpretation, requires great wisdom. It has been assumed by many, perhaps by most, that there is concealed here purposely by John, the name of some emperor or other person. Hence various names have been suggested. Among these are the following: Cæsar Augustus, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Mohammed, Luther, Calvin, Beza, Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III. The names of two modern politicians have been added to the list, inasmuch as the numerical value of the letters in their names makes up this symbolic number, 666. The most popular interpretation in recent years is that the Emperor Nero is meant by John. Sweete seems inclined to combine this view with that favored in the comments that follow. It is not meant that John's purpose is to hide any person's name so that men and after ages might puzzle over it. What John means is that the name, that is, the character of the beast, and the number of that name, expressed in the symbolic form of 666, correspond to each other. The name of the beast re-

veals the beast, is expressive of its character, just as the name, Jacob, reveals the man who had power with God. The numerical value of the name corresponds with the name; it also reveals the character of the beast. Throughout the entire book the number seven stands as the symbol of perfection, completeness. Jesus employed this number to express his conception of a complete forgiveness. It must be a seventy times seven forgiveness; that is, a complete and utter forgiveness (*Matt. 18:22*). The beast has been allowed to assume a sevenfold manifestation as a kind of parody of the divine, asserting also that it was a perfect manifestation of the worldly beastlike power. In the later stages of its existence the lamblike ally had much to do in working it into a resemblance to the divine. But as to the reality of things, the seemingly divine could never become anything more than a self-confessed failure; the beast would remain a beast. The character, the condition, the history of the beast could never be expressed in terms of the seven; it would always be less than perfect. The number of the beast is, therefore, not a seven, the symbol of the divine, but a six, that which falls short of the divine. To show how completely the beast forever remains fallen short of the divine, there is the number six, given three times. It has not reached the fulness of the divine name, of God's name. If it had been intended to represent a divine fulness, a completeness in God's sight, two methods might have been adopted by John in which to express this. He might declare, in words, that the beast was after all only a beast, that the lamblike appearance and the asserted prophethood did not make anything beyond deception; or he might declare the same thing in the use of symbolic numbers. He might say, as here, the character of the beast is shown in the number 666. To the Hebrew mind this would be a striking manner of revealing the character. If John had intended to declare that a person really stood for divine things, he might say that his name can be expressed in the number 777; but the number 666 puts the beast, with all its power and deception, with all the aid of the false

prophet, in the category of incompleteness. It is the assertion that it is not divine, not complete, but is a beast with a beastlike nature shown by its beastlike number. The number 666 represents, therefore, not any person or kingdom, past or present, but is the manifestation of that which demands a world-wide worship, claiming to be divine, but which, in reality, is only a beast; it is not a Christ, but an Anti-christ. The Apocalypse is a book of symbols, not of literal names. There is a trinity of the dragon, the first and second beasts. Against the Lamb are the world, the flesh, the devil. Each of these may be described by a six, indicating the nature. The nature of all united would be a threefold six. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, denoted by a six, sensual; denoted by a six, devilish; denoted by a six, altogether unholy and profane; less than God, against God, therefore to be destroyed. In the end the dragon, the first beast, the false prophet, the unclean woman, the great city Babylon, all are doomed to destruction. Compare Milligan on this passage, Briggs, "Messiah," p. 324. All attempts to solve this enigma must be imperfect; but when the time comes for its full solution, doubtless the truth of the prophecy will be clearly seen.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Jesus has had and does have great enemies. All sin is utterly repulsive when looked upon with holy eyes (*ver. 1*).
2. Satan is a personal being, skilled in spiritual warfare. He has courage, foresight, cruelty, in full measure. He would destroy his foes, if he could; he will miserably destroy, in the end, his own followers (*ver. 2*).
3. Satan is a god of this world. We cannot estimate by majorities among men where the truth is. The attractions of the world must not be allowed to blind the soul (*ver. 3*).
4. The devil has agencies at work in the world. Satan can delude persons in no better way than to persuade them that he does not exist. He makes allies to himself of the world, fashion, wealth, bodily passions. If Satan can get control of civil governments they are instruments

of cruelty, suppressing the truth and hindering Christ. God can overrule the purposes of even hostile nations that his own kingdom may be extended. Powers resisting God will, in the end, be overturned (ver. 4).

5. Satan and sin seem to have limitless power, but there are bounds beyond which they cannot go. Above all things is God and his holy purpose. We cannot understand why evil itself is permitted, and why Satan can rage among men. At the last God will shine out triumphant, and all will rejoice in and admire the wisdom of God (ver. 5, 6).

6. Satan may overcome in an outward way, but in the end he will be overcome. The dead Jesus could not be held in the grave. Christ's cause cannot be crushed by persecution, or burned at the stake, or confined to a dungeon. The triumphant Jehovah can laugh at his discomfited foes (ver. 7; Ps. 2).

7. Because there is a book of life, no one will be forgotten in the day of Christ's triumph. No one will be given over to Satan's power to tempt overmuch. It is the Lamb's book of life; in it will be the names of the friends of Jesus. It is the registration of his personal friends. The church record ought to correspond with this book (ver. 8).

8. God's keeping power is manifest in this, he restrains the power of Satan so that his children walk in safety (ver. 8).

9. The spiritual ear is for hearing. The one who hears and does not do, will speedily lose the power of hearing. Every one should have the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam. 3 : 10); the spirit of Micaiah (1 Kings 22 : 14); the spirit of Saul (Acts 22 : 10). The attentive heart, the willing mind, the obedient life should be joined together (ver. 9).

10. Christians need courage, an aggressive spirit, and the power that comes from longsuffering. The church will make progress by learning to endure wrongs in a rejoicing manner. Conquest comes through patience (ver. 10).

11. The most dangerous error is that which most resembles the truth. A dragon that looks like a lamb is more dangerous than a dragon which shows by its appearance that it is a dragon. Satan

coming as a friend can do more harm than when coming as an open enemy. We need wisdom to discern the lamb from the dragon (ver. 11).

12. The Hebrew young men refused to bow to anything less than God (Dan. 3 : 18). Jesus refused to worship any one but God. The heart naturally centers itself about some object as the aim in life, making a god for itself (ver. 12).

13. God gives strength to the truth of testimony by miracles in nature. When God does a miracle, Satan will try to imitate and deceive. The deceptive imitations of the truth must be guarded against. The faith of Jesus Satan tried to turn into a pride of faith; the sin of presumption (ver. 13; Matt. 4 : 6).

14. To be a Christian often involves great losses, sacrifices of social position, business, friends. Jesus compensates, and more than compensates, for losses incurred for his sake (Matt. 19 : 29). The disciples counted it joy that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake (Acts 5 : 41). Present losses bring future gains (ver. 15).

15. All character tends to ripen into openness and completeness. In time every man will be known openly, whether for or against Christ. God knows his own, and marks them for safety. Men also bear the marks of Satan. Swearing, drinking, licentiousness are brands of Satan's ownership (ver. 16).

16. Satan closes to the Christian many avenues to success in life; piety is at times a mark of singularity; the broad way is the popular way. But the narrow way is always God's way, and the way of permanent blessing (ver. 17).

17. Difficult passages are found in the Scriptures. If they are not understood, this in no way imperils the knowledge of the way of salvation. The general drift of the Scriptures is plain and open. They are a light and a lamp. Difficult passages, as a rule, grow plainer under the influence of prayer and meditation. Some passages must remain unexplained until the future, or eternity explains them (ver. 18).

18. Philip was a help to the treasurer in understanding the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is promised for guidance into the truth (ver. 18; John 16 : 13).

**SECTION VII. THE SERIES OF THE BOWLS. CHAPTERS XIV-XVI.** We come now to the concluding series of visions; that of the vials, rather bowls. The trumpets reveal God's dealings with the world in order that it may be brought to repentance. They therefore present a mingling of penalty and mercy. We behold here, therefore, dealings that are almost entirely judicial in their nature. This series reveals the holy procedure of God. The vessels are not ordinary dishes, but vessels used in the sanctuary worship. They are emptied of their contents by holy angels. There is nothing vindictive in this vision but everything that is indicative of God's holy nature; the utter breaking down of the forces of darkness, the final and complete triumph of righteousness. When it is said that these are "the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God," it is not meant that these things occur in order of time after all that has gone before, but that they belong to that procedure of God in its final processes of judgment, processes that should not be exhausted until all the worldly forces against God should be put down. It is a triumph that gives birth to the song of Moses and the Lamb; the great victories of the Old and the New Testaments standing side by side.

Fairbairn thus comments on the emptying of the bowls: "The action of pouring out in this sense and sometimes also with the mention of a cup from which the contents are to be poured, is frequently used in Old Testament prophecy (Psa. 75:8), denoting the resistless energy of the visitation of evil."

We must not expect chronology in this book; it is a book of visions. We see the future in one aspect, terminating in a glorious ending. We behold it then again in another aspect, and ending in songs of triumph. In all the series are the same great moral principles of God's moral government, leading always to the same glorious results. In the trumpets we came to an end ushered in by the announcement that God had won a universal kingdom (11:15). That the two series of the trumpets and the bowls run side by side is evident from a glance at the two:

| THE TRUMPETS<br>RELATING TO  | THE BOWLS<br>RELATING TO   |
|--|--|
| 1. The earth, 8:7.   | 1. The earth, 16:2.  |
| 2. The sea, 8:8.   | 2. The sea, 16:3.  |
| 3. Rivers and fountains of the waters, 8:10.   | 3. Rivers and fountains of waters, 16:4.   |
| 4. The sun, moon, and stars, 8:12.   | 4. The sun, 16:8.  |
| 5. The pit of the abyss, 9:2.  | 5. The throne of the beast, 16:10.   |
| 6. The great river Euphrates, 9:14.  | 6. The great river Euphrates, 16:12.   |
| 7. Great voices in heaven followed by lightnings, thunders, earthquake, and great hail, 11:15, 19. | 7. A great voice from the throne, followed by lightnings, voices, thunders, a great earthquake, and great hail, 16:17, 18, 21. |

This series is divided, as are the two others, into groups of four and three. At the opening of the fifth seal was a sight of the altar of sacrifice; at the fifth trumpet the pit of the abyss was opened; when the fifth bowl is poured out the throne of the beast came into sight. All the series are constructed on the same plan; all reveal a controlling, governing, and conquering Christ, the Redeemer; all bring into clear light the great opposing forces, all come to a like glorious end when Christ alone is seen sitting on the throne with his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:27). A climax is noticeable in this series, a growing intensity of penalty; the effects are more extensive and more hurtful than in the preceding series. The bowls, with their contents, also grow in intensity as they proceed. When the judgments of God have finished their course and accomplished their work, there come the words: "It is done" (16:17). Then the cities of the nations fall, they are destroyed in their character of strongholds of evil. Great Babylon comes before God's bar and

she perishes in her might. Everything undergoes a revolution, and the anti-christian spirit that had to so great an extent, and for so long a time, had power over the kingdoms of the earth, is judged and cast out. Here, as in all other parts of this book, we shall get the true meaning only so far as we seek, not details in history, but the great principles that are constantly waging war, until at the last the conquering Christ and his faithful followers are seen to be triumphant.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

**THREE CONSOLATORY VISIONS.** In the two preceding chapters we had a revelation of three great enemies of the Christian church. There was the dragon, representing the personal Satan with his malice, plans, and power, warring, in all possible ways, against Jesus and his cause. There was the seven-headed beast, a monstrous creature, symbolizing the great and terrible world-powers persecuting the church. There was the beast springing from the earth, fitted to deceive the church with its false prophesying, its seeming religious spirit whereby the worldly power was induced to make the lot of the church more bitter. Through the agency of this satanic trinity the church had suffered severely, being driven into the wilderness (12: 14); the flood was sent to engulf her (12: 15); the church was almost silenced—only two witnesses being left to bear testimony (11: 3); these were killed and their bodies lie unburied (11: 8); the saints suffer under a widespread persecution, cut off from the business relations of life (13: 17); the souls of the martyred dead, under the altar, pray for vindication (6: 9). What will be the outcome of these violent and persistent outbreaks upon the people of God? Will they pass out of their Egypt, through a Red Sea into a land of promise, as in the olden times? This chapter is, in large part, an answer to this unasked question. It is in accord with the scope and plan of the book to look somewhere, in this part of the book, for some vision of consolation. Between the sixth and seventh seals comes the consolatory vision in chap. VII; between the sixth and seventh

trumpets come the visions of hope and encouragement in chap. X, XI. When the most fearful plagues contained in the seven bowls are about to be revealed in vision, we would expect to find something consoling and comforting to the people that follow Christ. There is a deviation here from the structure found in the other parts, the seals and the trumpets, in that we have here the visions before the revelation of the seven bowls. When the angels begin to pour out their bowls, there is no break, but a constant and rapid progress to the close. It is impossible to tell just why the order of the book, so methodical in its structure, is broken in upon at this place, and the visions placed before the series of the bowls instead of the usual place between the sixth and seventh bowls. But the visions are naturally placed here in immediate contrast with the beasts that threaten to destroy utterly the heritage of Christ upon the earth. The seer does not hold the mind of the reader in suspense. The church is not destroyed, the cross is not a failure, the sky is not all dark, Satan is not supreme. There is revealed here a glimpse of Jesus, the conquering Christ; conquering through the sacrifice of himself, with his spiritual forces by his side. They work together steadily and successfully, accomplishing, in the end, the destruction of the foes of Christ. Great Babylon is overthrown, the symbol of the organized opposition to Christ. The Lord himself returns, gathers in his people, and crushes all opposition. The visions of the harvest and the vintage are the preludes to heaven and hell. The vision extends to the times of the end. As the dragon works from the beginning of the Christian era, so also does Christ dwell on Mount Zion through all the Christian period, leading his holy forces. The chapter falls naturally into three divisions.

We have the Lamb on Mount Zion, a song which none but the redeemed can sing, the holy character of Christ's people (ver. 1-5); announcements of the eternal gospel, the fall of Babylon, the punishment of the ungodly (ver. 6-12); the vision of harvesting the holy, and gathering the vintage of the wicked (ver. 14-20).

*The Lamb on Mount Zion and his followers.*

**14** AND I looked, and, lo, <sup>r</sup>a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him <sup>s</sup>an hundred forty and four thousand, <sup>t</sup>having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

r 5:6; 7:9-17.

s 7:4-8; Heb. 12:22, 23.

t 3:12; 7:3; 13:16; Isa. 62:2.

**1-5. THE VISION OF THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT ZION.** *And . . . Sion,* rather, *And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the Mount Zion.* We see the continuity of the book in the reference to the Lamb who appeared in 5:16 in the midst of the throne. Jesus Christ, though unseen, is the one mighty force at work in enlarging the kingdom and breaking down all opposition. He is effective because he is a Lamb, effective through the patient endurance of himself and his people, overcoming because of his sufferings, making people holy on account of his atonement. **Stood, standing.** He is not represented as sitting, but, as the leader of the redeemed hosts, is seen standing. It was thus that Stephen saw him (<sup>Acts 7:56</sup>). *Mount Zion.* In chap. XI the holy city, Jerusalem, is regarded as the seat of God's true church and worship. In the Old Testament Zion was the symbol of God's dwelling-place on the earth (Ps. 2:7, 8; 9:11; 78:68; Isa. 35:10). In like manner Mount Zion in the holy city, the place of David's residence, is now regarded as the dwelling-place of David's greater Son. Not the literal Mount Zion is meant, but inasmuch as the great enemies are warring on the earth against the anointed One, Jesus is portrayed as fighting against his foes, and appropriately the scene is placed on Mount Zion, a strongly fortified place. The scene of the vision is laid, not in heaven, but on the earth. Heaven is a place of repose, of victory attained; earth is a scene of conflict, of struggle, that so heaven may be enlarged. Heaven is filled up from the earth. The dwelling on Mount Zion, the beautiful and holy place, represents the blessed condition of God's people now on the earth. (Comp. Heb. 12:22-24.) **A hundred forty and four thousand.** We have had this number before (7:4), giving the number of God's sealed ones. The number

**14** AND I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

is a symbol of completeness, of perfectness. Twelve is the number expressly set apart for the church: twelve tribes, twelve gates, twelve manner of fruits. The twelve tribes, with twelve thousand from each tribe, stand for the entire number of those saved from the earth. It is not a numerical statement, to be taken in a literal sense, but a symbolical representation of the complete number. There is a hint also, in the largeness of the number, that Christ's cause on the earth will not be a failure. In 7:14 the prominent thought is the preservation of God's people, having the seal as the sign of safety; here the prominent thought is that of service with and for Christ. **Having . . . foreheads,** rather, *Having his name, and the name of the Father, written on the forehead.* They are one in nature, in character, with the Redeemer. They are owned by him; they are his to serve him. They are openly and willingly his. Their outward life corresponds to their character. Those serving the beast have his name on their foreheads (13:17). All the marked are divided by a spiritual census into two divisions. Alford contends that those marked with the name of the Lamb and the Father do not embrace the entire number of the saved, but only the chosen ones among them, the preeminently holy and useful. But this view cannot be adopted. The symbolism is one of completeness, and those participating with Jesus in the triumph over the three great foes of the church indicate the entire body helping the Redeemer. In 7:4 the seal of God was upon the forehead, though it is not indicated what the seal was; here the name of the Saviour and the name of the Father jointly occur, showing a joint service and ownership. The book of Revelation bears express testimony to the divinity of Jesus in this indirect manner; being incidental it is the more expressive. In the forces under the

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 3 with their harps: 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 vir-

2 And I heard a voice out of heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as that of harpers, harping with their harps. 3 And they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders, and no one was able to learn the song, but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.

*u 1:15; 19:6; Ezek. 43:2.*

*v 5:8.*

*x 5:9; 15:3; Isa. 42:10.*

*y 2:17; Ps. 25:14.*

*z 5:9.*

*a 2 Cor. 11:2; 2 Peter 1:4.*

control of Christ are not simply men, but all holy agencies, literature, schools, the healing arts, the contributions of science.

2. A mysterious strain of music greets the ear. It is a sublime sound, compared to the sound of **many waters**, majestic in volume; like the noise of the sea, **great thunder**. It is not stated from whom the music comes; it is probably the united song of praise by the angels, the glorified saints, the redeemed creation, ever resounding about the throne. A further revelation is noted. **I heard . . . harps**, rather, *the voice which I heard was as the voice of many harpers harping with their harps*. The music is from heaven, and is distinguished from that of the redeemed host. Those making this music are invisible to the eye. There is always music where Jesus is. Music is the symbol of joy, gladness, conquest; where Jesus is not, there are tears and wailing (Matt. 22:13).

3. **They sung**, rather, *sing*. The song is a perpetual one. In 5:9 we have a new song sung by the living creatures and the twenty-four elders. **As it were**. It is not a really new song, for it has been sung for centuries; but in reality it is new, having a perpetual freshness for the heart. It is the song of redemption, which will ever awaken feelings of wonder, love, and praise. The song is sung by the unseen host, the harps joining with them. The song is of such a nature that no man can learn that song but the redeemed. Jesus describes the angels as rejoicing over the salvation of one penitent (Luke 15:10). This song of heaven can be learned by those only

on the earth who are Christ's people. It does not depend on esthetic ability, but on the moral character. Heaven would not be heaven to one who is not in sympathy with Jesus and holy things. Four assertions are made concerning this multitude: first, they are **redeemed**. This word means purchased; it is implied that the purchase is by means of the blood of the Lamb. Compare the same statement made in 5:9. There is a sacrifice made for all men (Heb. 2:9; Jude 4); those accepting the ransom are those here designated as the purchased, the redeemed. There is a community of feeling between the saints of God in all parts of the moral universe; the holy song is learned by those on the earth who are holy in heart. **Earth**. This term is used in contrast with **heaven** of ver. 2. There may also be the suggestion of an earthly and sinful condition that is natural to them.

4. Three further qualities are ascribed to them, **not defiled with women . . . virgins**, each clause being introduced by the term, **these**. First they are possessed of purity—*they are virgins*. This does not mean that they were ascetics, living apart from life in the community, monks or nuns, as some Romanists maintain, regarding the one hundred and forty-four thousand here as the preeminently holy people. Nor is this any praise of celibacy as is held by some Protestant writers; nor does it mean that they had kept from idolatry, which in the Old Testament is frequently called adultery; for the temptation to idolatry prevails only at certain stages in the history of the church. In 1 Cor. 11:2 Paul writes to the entire Corinthian

gins. These are they <sup>b</sup> which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These <sup>c</sup> were redeemed from among men, <sup>d</sup> being the firstfruits unto God 5 and to the Lamb. And <sup>e</sup> in their mouth was found no guile: for <sup>f</sup> they are without fault before the throne of God.

<sup>b</sup> 7: 15-17; 17: 14; Luke 9: 57-62; John 12: 26.

<sup>c</sup> 5: 9.

<sup>d</sup> James 1: 18.

<sup>e</sup> Num. 23: 21; Ps. 32: 2; Zeph. 3: 13; Phil. 2: 15.

These are they who follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from men, a first fruits to 5 God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no falsehood; they are without blemish.

church, "that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." John is describing a pure, lofty, holy life, such as belongs to a chaste virgin. The church is the bride of Christ, to be pure with Christ's purity. A third quality is that of obedience and devotion to Christ. **Follow . . . goeth.** This is a description of Christ's followers in their life on the earth. The present tense is descriptive of their present and abiding condition, one of fellowship with Christ. They share with Christ the very kind of a life that he himself lived; they go with him into self-denial; they bear a cross; they share in his death, resurrection, ascension, the reigning at God's right hand. The church must obey Christ's commands, be filled with Christ's spirit, repeat Christ's life over again on the earth. They were **among men**, but they have been taken out of the old life and set apart to God's service, having God's life in them. **First-fruits.** Among the Hebrews the first part of every harvest was set apart to the Lord, implying that all the remaining part belonged, in reality, to the Lord. It was a token of ownership, a prophecy also that more of the harvest would follow. The entire church in this case, the one hundred and forty-four thousand, is laid upon the altar as a first-fruits, as a token of ownership on God's part, of devotion on its part. Representing the entire host of Christ's people in all the ages the after-fruits cannot be any additions to the saved from among men, nor of the salvation of lost men or angels. The first-fruits of the redeemed from among men are a prophecy of the redemption of the physical creation, spoken of in Rom. 8: 21. The redeemed soul implies and calls for a redeemed world. Compare a like use of the term first-fruits in James 1: 18, embracing the entire number of Christian people.

**5.** A fourth attribute is here given; they are holy in character, **no guile**, rather, *no lie*, is found in their mouth. The words reveal the character (Matt. 12: 37). There is no entrance into heaven for the men in whose mouth is a lie (21: 27; 22: 15). They are men of faith, and, therefore, faithful. Their lives are in accord with Him who is the truth; they are, therefore, truthful. **Without fault** expresses the pure life; not sinlessness as yet, but in nature akin to Christ's, in time to be completely like Christ (1 John 3: 2). The holiness in them is of the same essence as that which will be found in them complete at the last. Earthly holiness differs from the holiness in heaven, not in quality, but in quantity, in degree. In so far as a man is really holy he is a participant in the only holiness that exists, the holiness begotten by the Holy Spirit, God's own holiness. Omit the phrase, **before the throne of God.** A church of this kind on the earth, pure, devoted, separated from sin, holy, is invincible. There are over fifteen million communicants in the Protestant churches in this country. If they had the qualities of the redeemed host seen in the vision by John, the cause of Christ would speedily conquer the world for Christ. A weak or wicked church is a great hindrance to Christ and his cause.

**6-12. THREE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OF IMPENDING EVENTS.** We have had a vision of the glorified Redeemer with his host of saintly men and women gaining victories as the ages pass by. The one hundred and forty-four thousand may therefore signify many millions in some centuries. What will they effect? will they widen the kingdom of Christ? will they prove stronger than the three great foes of Christ and his church? It is not simply an idle curiosity that desires to be gratified, but a heartfelt interest in the

<sup>f</sup> Song of Sol. 4: 7; Eph. 5: 27; Col. 1: 22; Jude 24.

*Heavenly proclamations; the harvest and vintage.*

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, saying with a loud voice,  
7 Fear God, and give glory to him; for  
the hour of his judgment is come:

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, 7 and tongue, and people; saying with a great voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, because the hour of his judg-

g 8 : 13.

h Eph. 3 : 9-11; Titus 1 : 2.

i Mark 16 : 15.

k 15 : 4; Ps. 76 : 7, 9.

l Isa. 13 : 6; 34 : 8.

Redeemer's kingdom that asks, What will be the outcome of the struggle? This passage answers the question. The vision covers a large period of time, from the beginning to the ending of the Christian dispensation. The vision reveals the agency by which the triumph will be assured, the preaching of the gospel; the downfall of the opposition, the punishment coming on the finally impenitent. Each one of the three announcements is made by an angel, ver. 6, 8, 9.

6. **And . . . heaven**, rather, *And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven*. The *another* does not mean that this one is different from any one thus far introduced to us (as in chap. 10, 11), but that another series of events is now introduced to us. The same term is used in connection with the second and third angels that follow. He is represented as flying in mid-heaven, that so his voice may reach the whole world. (Comp. 8 : 13.) It is not to be understood that this announcement is made by angels; it represents in vision the work that is done by the sanctified host spoken of in ver. 1. The mission of the angel is to carry and announce the **everlasting gospel**, rather, *an eternal gospel*. It is maintained by some that the reference is not to the proclamation of the gospel of salvation, because the definite article is not used and because of the contents of the message as given in ver. 7. According to this view the meaning of *gospel* is restricted to a prophesying which, in this case, is mainly of disaster to the ungodly. We must, however, retain the unvarying meaning of the term, that of glad tidings. *Eternal* shows the nature of the gospel as devised by God from eternity, unchangeable in its provisions, assuring men

that in no respect will its promises fail. God's kingdom is an everlasting one in contrast with the assured downfall of Satan's reign. The gospel is to be proclaimed to all that dwell on the earth. The universality is shown in the use of the four terms, **nation**, **kindred**, rather, *tribe*, **tongue**, and **people**. **Dwell on earth**. This expression is often applied to the ungodly alone; those whose life is of an earthly nature.

7. In this verse are the contents of the message. **Loud voice**, rather, *great*. This is in keeping with the position of the angel in mid-heaven. **Fear God . . . him**. To fear God in the Scripture sense is to serve him; this is the beginning of the Christian life. Jesus began his ministry with the preaching of repentance (Matt. 4 : 17). Peter and Paul both placed repentance among their fundamental teachings (Acts 2 : 38; 17 : 30). The service of God involves repentance, faith, love, obedience, worship, continuance in the grace of God. The **hour** shows that the time of the end, the manifestation of God's righteousness, is drawing near. A reason why men should repent is that God is about to manifest his righteousness and his indignation against all sin. Jesus appealed to the sense of fear as one motive of a holy life (Matt. 10 : 28). **His judgment**. God's grace and God's holiness are both united in the message; both should move men. It is designed to be a source of gladness to God's people that God is about to manifest his holy and righteous character in punishing sin, seeing how the church has suffered, and Christ has been hindered in his work by wrong-doing and wrong-doers. Not through any vindictive spirit, but through a sympathy with Christ's cause

<sup>m</sup> and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, <sup>n</sup>Babylon is fallen, is fallen, <sup>o</sup>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, <sup>p</sup>If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in

ment is come; and worship him who made the heaven, and the earth, and sea and fountains of waters.

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And another, a third angel, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any one worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his

<sup>m</sup> Neh. 9:6; Acts 14:15.

<sup>n</sup> 18:2, 10, 18-21; Isa. 21:9; Jer. 51:8.

<sup>o</sup> 11:8; 16:19; 17:2, 5; 18; Jer. 51:7.

<sup>p</sup> 13:3-6, 14-17.

the righteous will rejoice when God sits on his throne of judgment. The same gospel that contains the story of the cross and the sight of heaven, contains also the plain announcement of a hell for the impenitent. It is a kindness, inasmuch as there is a hell, that its existence and its nature be made publicly known. God's almighty power is dwelt upon here as a reason why his cause will triumph, and why he can break down all opposition. His creative power is shown in, **made . . . waters.** Such a being ought to be worshiped; the gospel is preached that he may be worshiped. The division of the water into the **sea**, and the **fountains**, is elsewhere found in this book (8:8-11; 16:3, 4). That men disobey a Being who is at the same time almighty, holy, and good, shows the unwisdom and depravity of the heart.

8. The second announcement is made, giving the result of the work of the first angel. **And . . . angel,** rather, *And another, a second angel.* **Babylon . . . city,** rather, *Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great.* Here, for the first time, is introduced this name which fills so large a place in the after part of the book (<sup>chap.</sup> XVII, XVIII). The destruction of Babylon is again announced in 16:19. It is difficult to tell what is meant by Babylon. Some say Rome, pagan and papal; others a church that has become worldly and unclean. Its identity is uncertain, but its doom is sure. The repetition of *fallen* shows how impressive is the destruction of the city, how strong had been her opposition, how essential that it must be gotten out of the way. **Because.** This is to be omitted. **Nations . . . fornication.** According to Alford, who thinks Rome is

meant, two thoughts are here mingled, (1) **the wine of her fornication**, her idolatry, her false teachings, and worship, whereby she has seduced all nations (17:2); (2) **the wine of the wrath** of God which God shall give to her in return for her false teachings and leadership (ver. 10; 16:19). In Jer. 51:7 is the foundation for this figure, making the nations to drink of her wine. God has a holy retribution whereby the one that sins shall find in that sin his own punishment. God's moral laws seem to be slow in their operation, but even the heathen noticed the unvarying character of God's laws. Plutarch, a heathen man, wrote one of the world's finest treatises on the certainty of God's moral laws in his "Delay of the Deity in Punishing the Wicked." This passage and 11:5 are akin to each other: the one announcing the removal of the obstruction, the other announcing the establishment of God's kingdom.

9. **And the third angel followed,** rather, *And another angel, a third, followed.* **Loud voice,** rather, *great.* It is worth noting that the loud voice is attributed to the first and third angels, but not to the second. In the second series of three angels (ver. 14-18) the same plan is followed, the loud voice occurring in connection with the first and third, but not with the second. What moral value or teaching, if any, can be attributed to the presence and to the omission of the loud voice cannot be known. The entire book is built upon a carefully considered and methodical plan. In the preceding verse is the judgment upon Babylon, which may be regarded as approaching in meaning the symbolic second beast (13:11), the false prophet (20:10); in

10 his hand, 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 <sup>t</sup>in the presence of the holy angels, 11 and in the presence of the Lamb: and

<sup>q</sup> Job 21 : 20.

<sup>r</sup> 16 : 10; 18 : 6.

<sup>s</sup> 19 : 20; Ps. 11 : 6; Isa. 34 : 9; Ezek. 38 : 22.  
<sup>t</sup> Ps. 91 : 8; 2 Thess. 1 : 7-10.

this verse is the judgment upon the worshipers of that beast itself. The dragon, the first beast (13 : 1), Babylon, the unclean woman (17 : 1), are all varying forms of organized wickedness warring against Christ. These enemies are summed up, not in any person, or located in any one place or age, but exist in varying forms wherever Satan works. As Jesus is described under the figure of a Lamb, his opponent is portrayed as a dragon. The followers of Jesus are holy in nature, compared to virgins (14 : 4); the allies of Satan are ferocious beasts (13 : 1, 11). The holy city is a picture of Christ's cause; the opposition to Christ is a Babylon. The cause of Christ is given under the figure of a chaste woman; the cause of Satan is given under the figure of an unclean woman. Reference is found to the mark upon the forehead and the hand, the outward sign of worldliness, the identification with the spirit of the world in 13 : 16. There punishment came upon those not in alliance with ungodliness; here, when God's judgments begin, the penalty is upon those having that mark. It is vastly better to be punished slightly by the beast than to be punished forever by the Lord. In reality every one not in alliance with God is regarded as arrayed against God. It is not needful that one shall announce himself a blasphemer in order that he may be a real foe of Christ and his cause.

**10.** In four ways mentioned in this and the following verse are the worshipers of the beast punished. The pictures of the punishment are fearful to contemplate. The figure employed in ver. 8 of Babylon drinking from a cup is here used. First, **Wine of the wrath of God.** (Comp. Ps. 70 : 8; Isa. 61 : 17; Jer. 25 : 15.) There is a holy indignation in God's nature. He is good, and hence, he is holy. Love in God is not a sentiment merely, but an active

10 forehead, or on his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled undiluted in the cup of his wrath, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone before the holy 11 angels, and before the Lamb. And

principle, a love for all good things, and good ends for his universal kingdom. He hates iniquity, he cannot help it, impelled thereto by his own holy nature. **Poured out . . . indignation,** rather, *prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger.* The custom was in ancient times to mingle the water with the wine, diluting it, and thereby weakening its power. The meaning here is that no mitigating elements enter into the punishment; it falls heavy and severe. It is justice untempered with mercy. There are varying degrees of God's wrath; according to light, opportunity, and fixedness in sin will be the penalty (Luke 12 : 48).

Secondly, **Tormented . . . brimstone.** We are not required to take these terms literally. There may be punishments, eternal in their nature, without involving physical features. The only way in which we can understand the future is through the use of figures applicable to the life that now is. The expression refers mainly to the punishments in the other existence (19 : 20; 20 : 10; 21 : 8). It is possible, however, to understand it of punishments, severe and just, upon the ungodly in this life. The cities in the plain were rained upon by a storm of fire and brimstone, furnishing the figure here employed to indicate the punishment (Gen. 19 : 24). The seven penalties mentioned in chap. XVI, the plagues of the seven bowls, may furnish fitting illustrations of this severe expression, fire and brimstone. The righteous judgments of God have, in general, a beginning in this life. Growing more intense toward the end of the ages they will ripen into the unending penalties of the unseen existence. **In the presence . . . Lamb.** This does not mean, as Alford maintains, that there is a literal view of the sufferings of the wicked by the holy angels and the Saviour founded

- <sup>a</sup>the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have <sup>b</sup>no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
- 12 <sup>c</sup>Here is the patience of the saints: <sup>d</sup>here are they that keep the commandments of God, <sup>e</sup>and the faith of Jesus.
- 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, <sup>f</sup>Blessed are the dead <sup>g</sup>which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, <sup>h</sup>that
- the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.
- 12 Here is the patience of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
- 13 And I heard a voice out of heaven, saying, Write, Happy are the dead who die in the Lord, henceforth; yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from

<sup>u</sup> 19 : 3; Isa. 34 : 10.      <sup>x</sup> Mark 9 : 43-48.      <sup>y</sup> 13 : 10.      <sup>z</sup> 12 : 17.

<sup>a</sup> 3 : 8, 10.      <sup>b</sup> 20 : 6; Isa. 57 : 1, 2; Phil. 1 : 21-23.      <sup>c</sup> Rom. 14 : 8; 1 Cor. 15 : 18; 1 Thess. 4 : 14, 16.  
<sup>d</sup> 6 : 11; 7 : 14-17; Job 3 : 17-19; 2 Thess. 1 : 6, 7.

on Luke 16 : 23, which passage is itself a parable. It means that, as taught in 2 Thess. 1 : 6-9, the Lamb and the angels are the executors of God's holy will. There is certainly taught here an acquiescence and approval on the part of Jesus and the angels of the doom that awaits the wicked. The punishment is not arbitrary, inflicted simply because God is almighty. There is reasonableness in God's treatment of all men, both in hell and in heaven.

11. The third element of the penalty is given, the **smoke . . . ever**. The foundation of the figure is found in Gen. 19 : 28. There is given under a varying figure the same thought contained in the preceding verse. The fourth element expresses the persistency of the punishment, **day and night**, as the preceding expression had indicated the endlessness of it. If the design was to express the unendingness of the penalty, it could not have done it in a more forcible way. Milligan maintains that the reference here is to punishments in this life only, inasmuch as the article is omitted in the expression **forever and ever**, literally, unto ages of ages. But the general impression made on the mind is that of timelessness. "The partial punishment inflicted under the trumpets has now given place to a judgment which is final and a sentence without time limits" (SWETE). That the punishment is justified is shown in the words, **worship the beast and his image**. If there is the eternal mark of the beast upon the soul, in this life and the next, even reason would assert the necessity of an eternal punishment. There is a wide contrast between the use of the term **rest** here and in 4:8. Jesus gives rest; the

righteous do not weary of praise; the wicked have no rest in heart.

12. Two sayings follow the proclamations of the angels before we get a sight of the Judge himself. **Here . . . saints.** While dread penalties come upon the ungodly, both here and hereafter, there is, on the part of the saints, the maintenance of a steadfast, enduring life. Under persecution there is a call for steadfastness. An appeal is made for a patient life, because, in time, reward and penalty will be fully revealed. **Here are.** Omit these words. **They . . . Jesus.** Two characteristics of the saints are mentioned, obedience toward God, and faith in Jesus. Without these the Christian life cannot exist; existing abundantly, steadfastness inevitably results. To make the finest Christian life, both in doing and in suffering, there is required, not genius, but an abiding hold on the personal Christ.

13. A second saying is given. **Voice.** It is not stated by whom the saying is uttered. It has been conjectured that it is the same angel who reveals the vision to John in 1:1; 4:1; 19:9. In the last passage mentioned the angel bids John, as here, to write. If persecution arises, it is not strange that we find the steadfastness of the saints incurring violent and martyr deaths. The martyr is pronounced a **blessed man**; his life is not thrown away; he needs not to ask the pity of his fellows. To **die in the Lord** is to enter into the unseen life in fellowship with Christ. To be one with Christ involves a blessed resurrection like unto his own. **From henceforth.** Some take this to mean from a point toward the closing era, when the last ages have been entered

they may rest from their labours; and  
their works do follow them.

their labors, for their works follow  
with them.

*e Matt. 25 : 35-40 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 58 ; Heb. 6 : 10, 11.*

upon, the time of the harvest and the vintage, when the blessedness of the holy dead would be about to come to completion. On this view the reference would not be to all the righteous dead of all the Christian ages, but to those dying for Christ toward the end of this era. It is true, in a general way, that all who die in the Lord enter into a blessed and saved state; their friends need not mourn for them (1 Thess. 4 : 13). The promise of blessedness here given is largely for the comfort of those who pass through troublous times, incurring danger and death. The words do not imply that those who died before Christ, or those falling asleep quietly in their own homes, are not blessed, but they serve as a stimulus and encouragement, nerving the Christian to the endurance of hardship. We may refer the *from henceforth* to the entire Christian era, during which period the symbolic number, the one hundred and forty-four thousand, are being gathered together. It is not taught here that the sainted dead enter at once upon the full possession of their blessedness, but that such faithfulness, even unto death, receives the blessing that God has in store. The full blessedness of no Christian will come until the consummation of all things; the Christian has only a partial life until the redemption of the body at the resurrection (Rom. 8 : 23). The blessedness spoken of consists, partly at least, in a release from toils and hardships. The voice continues through all the words of this verse. The Spirit unites in the declaration already made, and specifies the nature of the blessedness promised. **Labours.** This is a term indicating toil, severe hardship, persecution, inducing a certain weariness in life. The endurance of the hardships mentioned in 2 Cor. 11 : 23-29, creates a hungering for the rest of the after life. The saints are fitted by their character for the enjoyment of that life of rest. **Their works.** A very different word from that rendered labors. **Follow them,** rather, *follow with them.* They enter, a prepared people, into a prepared place. Their good

works will not be forgotten by their Lord at his coming. They are saved by grace; they are rewarded according to their works. A man and his life are inseparable; the remembrance by the rich man of his past life justifies his present condition (Luke 16 : 25). The works of all men follow with them, inasmuch as Jesus makes the deeds of this life the foundation of the eternal condition (Matt. 25 : 31-46). The exaltation of Jesus followed his life of perfect obedience here. The exaltation was the result of the life here (Phil. 2 : 9).

**14-20. THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE.** In the first section was a vision of the church, its character, its numbers, its union in worship with the heavenly host. In the second section (ver. 6-13) was the vision of the mission of the church in giving the gospel to the world, with its attendant judgments upon the ungodly; the fall of Babylon and the fearful punishments upon all of those arrayed against God; the appeal to patience in the Christian life and a blessing pronounced upon the holy dead. Three angels appeared in ver. 6, 8, 9. In this section is a vision of Jesus occupying the central place among the angels, three preceding and three following his appearance. No one can read the book of Revelation and have any doubt as to the position accorded to Jesus by God in giving the visions; Jesus occupies the central place, having a name above every name (Phil. 2 : 10). Two scenes are presented, that of the harvest, in which, mainly, the ingathering of the saved is presented, and that of the vintage, in which, mainly, the penalties upon the ungodly are presented.

**14.** In this verse is a vision of the coming of Jesus. He has many and varied comings. He comes in judgments (3 : 3); he comes through the Holy Spirit (John 14 : 18); he came in the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 16 : 28); he comes at many periods of the present Christian era (Matt. 26 : 64 R. V.). He comes also, finally, in his own glorified person. Naturally, he is seen in the central place of the seven appearances ver.

**14** And I looked, and behold <sup>f</sup>a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat <sup>g</sup>like unto the Son of man, <sup>h</sup>having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

**15** And another angel<sup>i</sup> came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, <sup>k</sup>Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is

**14** And I saw, and behold a white cloud, and on the cloud one sitting like a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came forth out of the temple, crying with a great voice to him who sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap;

*f* 1 : 7; Luke 21 : 27.

*g* 1 : 13.

*h* 6 : 2; Heb. 2 : 9.

*i* 16 : 17.

*k* Joel 3 : 13; Matt. 13 : 39.

**6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 17, 18.** Three things indicate that the one seen is the Christ: the white cloud, the crown, the appearance as a Son of man. **Looked**, rather, *saw*. **One sat**, rather, *one sitting*.

**White cloud.** A bright cloud overshadowed the apostolic group on the mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17 : 5); a cloud hid the ascending Jesus from the sight of men (*Acts* 1 : 9); it was predicted that Jesus would come again in the clouds of heaven (*Mark* 13 : 26). Seated upon a cloud, the symbol of sovereignty, Jesus comes to wind up the affairs of men, the history of the race. There was a time when the human race began to be; there comes a time when another chapter in the history of the race will be ushered in by the coming of Jesus, the Son of man, rather, *a Son of man*. Without doubt, Jesus is here indicated. It is not one of the angelic beings, as in the other six cases, but one having a human form. This can be no other than the incarnate Son of God. In 1 : 13 the same form of expression occurs. The omission of the definite article is no proof in a case of this kind, where the person is well known, that Jesus is not meant. Some regard the appearance here as that of an angel, representing him, but this view is untenable. It is the coming of the Lord himself; nothing else will explain all the surroundings of this event. It is worthy of special notice that Jesus, after his departure from the earth, yet possesses his human nature, he is a Son of man, the title that Jesus so frequently used concerning himself. The title is a pledge of his interest in us, a prophecy of the salvation of those trusting in him. **Golden crown.** This indicates kingship, the assertion of sovereignty, the downfall of opposition, as in ver. 8, and now the judgment, in which all men will share. We may not forget that Jesus is to be Lord

as well as Saviour; judge as well as advocate. A one-sided view of Christ, forgetting his kingship, his rulership, must lead to great errors in belief and in conduct. This is the fifth appearance in vision of the Lord Jesus. In the first appearance (1 : 16) he holds the stars in his hand; in the second, he takes the sealed book from the hand of the Father (5 : 6, 7); in the third, he appears under the form of the strong angel (10 : 2); in the fourth, he is with his church on Mount Zion (14 : 1). The crown denotes the sovereignty; the sickle, the end, the consummation of all things. To the farmer the sickle is the symbol of the crowning of the year's work. For ages Jesus has watched over the world in sowing good seed, in cultivating men through the Holy Spirit; now comes the end. In his earthly ministry Jesus spoke of the harvesting of his people, meaning the ingathering of his saints, through the ministry of angels (Matt. 9 : 37, 38; 13 : 29, 30).

**15.** The angel comes from the **temple**, which here means the innermost holy shrine, where God symbolically dwells. The meaning is that the message is from God himself. On earth, as in heaven, Jesus does nothing of himself, nothing apart from God the Father's will (*John* 5 : 19). Some have thought it incongruous for Jesus, the divine Son of God, to receive a message through an angel, as here represented. We must remember that all this takes place in vision; the meaning conveyed to us is that Jesus, in his work of separating between men, in gathering in his own, is acting according to God's will, carrying out the divine purpose. Jesus is to act as the judge of men (*John* 5 : 22).

**Thrust . . . reap**, rather, *Send forth thy sickle and reap*. There is a fitness in reaping at this time, for the time is come to reap. God does not act in haste, nor do untimely things, for he

- come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
- 16 And he that sat on the cloud <sup>w</sup> 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, <sup>n</sup> which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that

- because the hour to reap is come; because the harvest of the earth is ripe.
- 16 And he who sat on the cloud cast his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.
- 17 And another angel came forth out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, having authority over fire; and he called with a great voice to him who had the sharp

*l* Jer. 51 : 33; Matt. 23 : 32; 13 : 30; *l* Thess. 2 : 16.

*m* John 5 : 22, 23.

*n* 16 : 8.

is a God of reason. Jesus forbids the pulling up of the tares, because, in time, the harvest will come (Matt. 13 : 30). **Ripe**, rather, *over-ripe*, or dried up. The meaning is that the harvest is perfectly ripe, so that the stock has become dry. The picture of the harvest has many analogies to the moral world: the sowing of the seed, the varying reception of the seed by the soil, the tares, the long delays in ripening, the hindrances to growth, the wearying results of the harvest. At the last comes a time of reaping. The sickle of Jesus means a ripening of character, a righteous discrimination among men, a final end to the present dispensation on the earth. Ripened goodness means heaven; ripened sinfulness means hell.

**16.** The incidents of this verse follow closely upon the preceding. The command to reap is followed by the reaping. **Thrust . . . earth**, rather, *cast his sickle upon the earth*. The symbolic act in the vision was that of throwing his sickle upon the earth. The act of reaping itself is not described; who reaped the earth? who were the agents? how long it took to gather in the redeemed harvest? to these questions no answer is given. It takes place, however, in some way, under the superintending care of the Son of man, not of the angel who speaks to him. **Reaped**. We are to understand the reaping and the ingathering of the righteous alone. The analogy of the Scriptures and the general outline of the thought here, as well as the wide contrast presented by the following verses in describing the vintage, show that the reference here is to the ingathering of the wheat into the granary (Matt. 13 : 30). Jesus in person gathers his own; an angel gathers the wicked (ver. 19). The preaching of the eternal gospel was the occasion of a saved mul-

titude among men, composing the harvest of Christ. A great multitude from all quarters, drawn by redeeming love, quickened by the Holy Spirit, will be found walking in white when he comes.

**17.** We have in the following verses a wide contrast with the preceding ingathering. We have here portrayed the ingathering of the tares, the ungodly, under the figure of a vintage. This angel also comes from the innermost part of the temple, the holiest of all, implying thereby that he comes with a revelation of God's will. The judgment of God and the final separation among men takes place, according to God's holy plans. It is God's purpose (ver. 15) to save the godly; it is equally his purpose, as expressed in symbol, to destroy the ungodly. It will be ill with the wicked (isa. 3 : 11). In the light of Ezek. 33 : 11; Deut. 30 : 19; 1 Tim. 2 : 4, it may be affirmed that it is no delight to God to punish men; it is a strange work to him (isa. 28 : 21); it is against God's gracious provisions of mercy, against his appeals and counsels that men are disobedient.

**18.** Just as one came to the Son of man with a message (ver. 15), so here one comes with a message from God to the destroying angel. Swete regards the first reaper as the Son of man (ver. 14): "In the second process the chief part is assigned to an angel, who gathers in the fruit of the vine of the earth as the Son of man had gathered in its wheat. . . There is a delicate beauty in the assignment of the ingathering of the vintage to an angel, while the Son of man himself reaps the wheat harvest. The work of death is fitly left in the hands of a minister of justice; the Saviour of man appears 'unto salvation' (Heb. 9 : 28)." The angel is further described, **which . . . fire**, rather, *he that hath power over the fire*.

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. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridle,

sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; because its grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden outside of the city, and blood came forth out of the wine-press, even

*o Joel 3 : 13.*

*p 19 : 15-21.*

*q Isa. 63 : 1-3; Lam. 1 : 15.*

*r Heb. 13 : 12.*

*s Isa. 34 : 5-7; Ezek. 39 : 17-21.*

*t 19 : 14.*

This angel comes from the altar in the holy place; the angel who presents the prayers of saints to God, who casts fire upon the earth, causing judgments thereby (8 : 5-5). It is of the sacred fire, not of fire in general, that John speaks here. We may infer from the connection of this angel with the vision that the ingathering of the vintage is in answer to the prayers of the saints. Their prayers have been heard in heaven; they now bring answers upon the earth. Few great changes take place upon earth that are not connected with the prayers of God's people. The angel is to gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. This is the vintage of the wicked. The figure of the vintage is often used in the Old Testament (*Isa. 63 : 1-4*). The use of the term, *cup of his indignation* (ver. 10), referring to Babylon, indicates that the meaning here is restricted to the wicked. **Ripe.** Character always tends toward ripening. Character and destiny will always fit into each other; every man will go to his own place (*Acts 1 : 25*).

**19.** The method of the vintage is described, *thrust . . . earth*, rather, *cast his sickle into or upon the earth*. **Gathered the vine**, rather, *vintage*. **Great wine-press**, rather, *the wine-press, that great wine-press*. **Wrath of God.** This marks the wide difference between the harvest of the righteous and the vintage of the wicked. At the outcome of human affairs God separates according to character; the granary and the furnace represent the final conditions of men (*Matt. 13 : 30*). No farmer would cast the grain into the furnace; God will not put the tares into his granaries. The saving and glorifying of God's people, the work of discovering and punishing the unrighteous, are both

portrayed here, side by side. The life on earth ripens into heaven and hell. God's love and God's wrath are not antagonistic terms, as though both could not abide in the same person at one time. God is always love; he will never cease to be love, for that is the essence of his nature. God always has wrath against wrong-doing, a fixed attitude of indignation against unholiness. As long as the grain is in a formative state the farmer tries to better it by cultivation. When the harvest comes he can do nothing but cut it down. In like manner there is a time for growth in human character; with men at this time God deals graciously. There comes a harvest time, when God can do nothing but reap and separate.

**20. Without the city.** As in ver. 1, there is a reference to the holy city of Jerusalem, not in its literal but its symbolic sense. The meaning here is that the ingathering and the punishing of the wicked is unfitted to take place in the city; it takes place, therefore, outside of the city. The saved will dwell in the city (*21 : 2*); into it nothing unclean will be allowed to enter (*21 : 27*). **Blood.** The reference is not to real blood, but to the wine trodden out of the grapes, which resembles blood. In like manner Jesus spoke of the blood (*Matt. 26 : 28*). Blood naturally stands for extreme suffering, for destruction, for death. The entire passage, like that in ver. 9-11, abounds in the most fearful imagery. We must be careful to avoid giving it any literal interpretation. It has a meaning, intense and real, but expressed in highly wrought figures, poetical and material. **Horse bridles**, rather, *bridles of the horses*. The judgment is from God, it is the fierceness of his anger. He employs agencies and

by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

to the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

instruments to execute his purpose. John, in vision, sees troops of horsemen carrying out God's judgments. The wine, resembling blood, indicating the punishment of the wicked, covers the surrounding country, making a sea of blood, deep and wide. The meaning is plain, the destruction of the enemies of God will be great and overwhelming, as if an invading army of horsemen were almost covered by the blood. Compare with the passage in 19:13-15, for the same figure. There is no allusion here to the horsemen of chap. VI, or 9:17. **By the space, rather, as far as, a thousand and six hundred furlongs.** This is not to be interpreted in a literal way. It is equal, if taken literally, to one hundred and eighty-three English miles. It does not mean that the land of Palestine is to be covered with blood, or undergo punishment; nor does it refer to any definite part of the earth's surface. It is an expression entirely and purely symbolic. Nor does it mean simply that the penalty will be widespread, covering a large territory. Four is the symbolic number of the world; the four winds, the four quarters. To know that the entire ungodly world will be punished, crushed under the power of God's moral and unchanging laws, we have the number four multiplied by four, and this in turn multiplied by one hundred. It is in a way similar to this that the number one hundred and forty-four thousand is formed. Twelve stands as a number representing the good, the number of the tribes of the chosen people. The twelve is multiplied by itself and this by one thousand. The number thus found stands for the whole number of the saved in all the ages, in all the countries. The meaning, therefore, is plain when we look at this term as having a symbolic meaning; the entire ungodly world will be, as it were, trodden under foot by God's forces. Some great penalty must certainly be meant to justify the use of such strong terms in a book not designed to frighten men with dangers that have no existence. The book must not be rejected as unworthy of a divine revelation, containing teaching<sup>o</sup> not in

harmony with the character of God. Correspondingly severe terms are used by Christ in his personal ministry. He speaks of hell, destruction, the left hand, tares, everlasting punishment, the worm that dieth not, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, the outer darkness, torment, a great gulf. There is a severity in kindly nature if her laws are broken. In the spiritual life, which is under the control of the same God, there is a like severity (Rom. 11:22).

**NOTE. MOUNT ZION AND BABYLON.** In this chapter we have the forces of sin and wickedness arrayed against each other. They are symbolized in the terms Mount Zion and Babylon. In many places in the book we have the same forces, under different names, the same struggle, the same glorious ending. Before the seventh seal was opened we had great tribulations (7:14); the martyred souls in heaven, imploring God's holy interposition (5:10). In chap. XIV we have a vision of the church as the Redeemer's one great agency in the world for resisting and overcoming these great foes. The one mission of the church is the preaching of the gospel (14:6). The gospel proves victorious. For the third time in the book the contest issues in victory for Christ's cause. For the first time the term Babylon is introduced, standing here for the general agencies denominated the first and second beast in the previous chapter. This is evident from the words used; the wrath of God is proclaimed against those having the mark of the beast and who worship his image (14:9-11). In the Old Testament Babylon was a name of fearful import, the very opposite of God's cause. It fell in time, and its palaces became heaps of ruins. In like manner the opposition to Jehovah's Son is summed up in the one term, Babylon. John might have closed his book without introducing this term. But for the sake of picturqueness, and for an additional description of the ruin that comes on organized sin, he uses this term. It gives him opportunity, in chap. XVII, for a graphic description of the opposition of Babylon, its greatness, its utter

ruin. In this chapter he does not dwell on the term Babylon, but straightway makes use of the vision of the ingathering and the vintage, to give an account of the end. Babylon becomes synonymous with the vintage, with its wine-press of God's wrath. We come thus in this chapter to the end, for the third time. The saved are gathered in, the wicked are punished, and God reigns in acknowledged supremacy. Here the end of the book might be found, but in the two following chapters we have a detailed account of some of the agencies of penalty that God makes use of before the end comes. They cover in point of time, incidents and agencies that are prior to the judgment scene depicted in this chapter. It is well to remember that the book is built upon the plan, not of a continuous chronology from the first chapter to the closing chapter, but that it gives the entire course of the Redeemer's work, viewed in one aspect under the series of the seals ending in 8 : 1; another history of the cause of Christ on the earth, under a second aspect, closing in 11 : 15; a third history of the development of God's cause coming to its close in this chapter, but with appendices and illustrations of scenes mentioned in the chapter extending to and contained in chap. XVI-XX.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Where Jesus is his people will be. A church weakened by worldliness can do nothing for him. The power of Christ on the earth is a holy church; the power of the church is an indwelling Christ (ver. 1).

2. Heaven is a place of rejoicing; singing is natural to heaven. Only in the abode of the lost is no singing (ver. 2).

3. The preparation for the songs of heaven is to know the song of redemption when on the earth. The songs of the saved, there and here, are one. No one can learn the song but one who has learned of Jesus here (ver. 3).

4. The Christian on the earth is to be pure in heart, separate from the world, set apart to God. To be a Christian is not to feel right, but to be right and to do right (ver. 4).

5. Nathanael was praised by Christ for

his sincerity (John 1 : 47). The heart manifests itself in the mouth. A clean mouth reveals a clean heart. Satan has a lying mouth (ver. 5).

6. The gospel is worthy of all acceptation. Jesus commands its proclamation. The church must be a missionary church, because Christ was a missionary Christ (ver. 6).

7. God should be worshiped. His holy character, combined with his infinite attributes, render it fitting that all men should reverence him. Not to worship such a God is a confession of ingratitude and depravity of heart (ver. 7).

8. Even the highest will be brought low under God's retributive power. "Fallen" will be said of everything that is against God. At times great crises in affairs take place quickly. Every spiritual Babylon will fall in time (ver. 8).

9. Every man, in God's sight, has upon him a mark. Each man identifies himself with God, or is reckoned as against God. Every man's life centers in Jesus Christ, or in the beast (ver. 9).

10. Every man who is destroyed, in reality, destroys himself. He places himself in a position where God's laws must crush him. The chief torment of the lost man will be the self-accusation, the sense of the lost opportunity (ver. 10).

11. Everlasting punishment is clearly taught in the Scriptures. Everlasting blessedness and everlasting punishment find support in the words of Christ (Matt. 25 : 46). A fixed character means a fixed condition of blessedness or woe (ver. 11).

12. The Christian needs an enduring spirit. Bunyan's "Mr. Hold-Fast" is the need of the Christian life—holding up, holding on. To obey God and to love Jesus Christ will insure a steadfastness in the life (ver. 12).

13. Only those are blessed after death who are blessed before death. Living in the Lord will involve a dying in the Lord (ver. 13).

14. Jesus in heaven is yet the Son of man. He is not now a suppliant for man's help, but is sovereign, having the crown of the universe. He is fitted for ruling and for judging (ver. 14).

15. God is not hurried, for all the ages are his. Jesus permits men and the age

*The seven angels and the seven plagues—  
Song of Moses and the Lamb.*

**15** AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, <sup>a</sup>seven angels having the seven last plagues; <sup>x</sup> for

*u 16 : 1; 21 : 9; 2 Sam. 24 : 16, 17; 2 Kings 19 : 35; Acts 12 : 23.*

*x 14 : 10, 19; Dan. 12 : 6, 7, 11, 12.*

to work out their characters before the harvest comes. We cannot help ripening for the future (ver. 15).

16. Out of the fifteen hundred million people living on the earth, to be vastly increased as the ages go on, Jesus will gather his own. Not one will be lost. His happiness would not otherwise be complete (ver. 16, 17; John 17 : 24).

17. The wrath of God is just as real as the love of God. It is, in reality, God's love for holiness in activity, manifested in punishment of the finally impenitent. Sinful men should return to God, should kiss the Son while there is an open door for reconciliation (ver. 19; Ps. 2 : 12).

18. The rewards of the righteous will be an exceeding weight of glory; the punishments of the wicked will be exceedingly great and fearful. In the presence of such results, arising from sin, every one should flee from sin itself, with its consequent penalties, to God for forgiveness (ver. 20).

## CHAPTER XV.

**THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THEIR BOWLS.** This chapter and the following are closely bound together, the one being introductory to the other. The third series of visions, that of God's extreme judgments, begins with chap. XVI. Nothing shows more clearly than the structure of the book that it is not built up on a chronological plan. In the last chapter we came to the time of the end. We now come to scenes that are prior to the events just described. The seven bowls, with their judgments, form a part of God's procedure before the time of final separation, preparing the way for that event, bringing men also to a decision for righteousness. In this book we pass over the same periods of time, looking at the same events under different aspects. In the seals we had the entire course of human history passing before us, bringing out the one teaching, the ultimate issue of

**15** AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues; which are the

triumph for Christ's redemptive work on the earth. Victory crowns the struggling church. In the trumpets we pass over the same periods of time. Here we look on the two agencies by which Christ, through the church, conquers the world, the agencies of God's graciousness in the gospel and his manifested judgments. Here again the struggle issues in victory. In the bowls we have the outpouring of God's anger on a wicked world. Here the main aspect is that of severity. The seals had no introductory vision; the trumpets had one; this series has two visions in this chapter. This shows how artistically the book is constructed, with what a growing intensity we progress toward the final catastrophe. In this chapter the first verse is introductory—a sight of seven angels with seven bowls. Then is heard the song of Moses and the Lamb, looking for God's judgments to come (ver. 2-4). Seven angels emerge from the temple; there is given to them seven bowls full of God's wrath (ver. 5-8).

**1. Another sign.** A sign had been seen in 12 : 1, 3. The word rendered *sign* does not mean simply something marvelous in itself, designed to attract attention, but is indicative of something beyond itself, a prophetic sign. It is a sign significant of some great event impending, **great and marvellous.** It is a term used to describe the wonderful works of Jesus (Matt. 16 : 4). These works were intended to convey large teachings concerning himself and his mission. John describes the sign, **seven last plagues**, rather, **seven angels having seven plagues which are the last.** These plagues are God's most destructive agencies; they are his final and complete manifestations against obdurate wickedness. There may be a reference to the plagues in Egypt that fell with such force upon the enemies of God, especially as we have a plain allusion to the song of triumph at the

in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were <sup>y</sup>a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them <sup>z</sup>that had gotten the victory over the beast, <sup>x</sup>and

last, because in them is finished the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a glassy sea, mingled with fire; and those who were victorious over the beast, and over his

*y* 4 : 6; 21 : 18.

*z* 12 : 11; 1 Cor. 15 : 57.

*x* 13 : 15-17.

passage through the sea. In the series of the bowls we have the world contemplated simply in its guilt. The dealings of God are therefore simply and purely judicial, bringing out the severer aspects of God's character, ending with the destruction of the parties against whom they are directed. While moving alongside of the trumpets they present the judicial, the punitive character of God's dealings. The word *last* implies that there have been punishments heretofore, but these are the last in order of time, and as plagues, are most severe in nature. These will finally crush the wicked. Many punishments have been sent on a wicked world, mingled with mercy, these are unmixed penalty. They occur toward the end of the present order of things, for *in them . . . God, rather, for in them the wrath of God is finished.* The wrath of God is always displayed against sin. God is God because he is holy, and sin is sin because it is against God. Wrath is often restrained by purposes of mercy as long as there is hope. In these plagues God's wrath finds its full, final manifestations. The end in view is accomplished, the utter breaking-down of organized wickedness. It may not cease to be wickedness, but its open warfare, its hindrance to Christ's cause is removed. The wrath is finished because their unrighteousness has come to its full. A like thought is expressed in 14 : 18, where the vintage is overripe. In the series of the seals and trumpets there was a synchronous movement, both lying parallel with each other, from the beginning to the ending of the series. These plagues, on the other hand, belong apparently to the latter part of the dispensation. We may regard, however, the plagues as the completion of that series of events introduced by chap. XII, the introduction of Christianity on the earth. In this verse we have the essence of what will be contained in the next chapter. The angels do not receive the bowls containing the plagues until ver. 7

These plagues do not include the final judgment, but are prior to it in order of time.

**2-4. THE VISION OF THE SEA OF GLASS.** We first get a glimpse of heaven, the throne, the attendant saved persons, the heavenly music, showing the redemption in the past and the conquests to be secured. God's holiness is praised, and his righteous acts are declared to be manifested. We are fitted thus, by the declaration of the holy and righteous character of God, to see the manifestation of his wrath upon the wicked, as made known in the following verses.

**2. Sea of glass.** As showing the oneness of the book, we have a vision of this sea revealed once before (4 : 6). The same features meet us again and again; the same throne, the sea of glass, the four living creatures, the company of the redeemed, the Lamb of God, these show the continuity of the sacred drama. The sea is in position before the throne, which is not here described; but it must be in view, for the King upon the throne is praised. **Mingled with fire.** This is indicative of the judgments impending, to be made manifest in the seven plagues. It is not the transparent, calm, quiet sea indicating rest, repose, and peace, but the fiery, surging waves that reveal God's wrath about to be finished. Before the olden tabernacle stood the laver, the means by which the priest obtained the symbolic cleansing that fitted him to stand in God's holy presence. It stood for purity, forgiveness, peace of soul. This sea stands for unrest, disturbance, storm. Without a word the beholder feels that this fiery sea reveals a judgment impending. John sees praising God those who had come off conquerors. **And them . . . name,** rather, *And them that came victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name.* The passages in 13 : 17, 18 must be read in connection with this. The **beast** stands for the worldly spirit

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. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

b 5 : 8; 14 : 2.

c 14 : 3; Exod. 15 : 1-18; Deut. 31 : 30.

d 5 : 9-13.

opposed to the Lamb; his image and the number of his name are the manifestations of God's outward representations of that bestial power. Taken together they constitute the satanic and ungodly opposition to Christ and his cause. The Christian life always has antagonisms and antagonists. Paul speaks of them in the same figurative way in Eph. 6 : 12-18. The term rendered *from* is literally *out of*. Its meaning is, perhaps, that they were almost in the power of the beast; they would have been helpless had they not been cared for by the strong Son of God, the Redeemer. Inasmuch as they sing the song of Moses, the Old Testament leader of God's people, it follows that this saved company embraces the Old Testament saints as well as the New Testament saints. In all ages there has been an organized satanic power, the power of the beast. In every age Satan has put his mark on his followers; in every age the man saved has been saved alone by faith in a personal God, who was his redeemer; in every age the godly life has been one of contest and overcoming; in all ages the principle of saintship is the same; the saved of all ages are saved through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ (13 : 8). **On the sea**, rather, *by the sea*. The words can be rendered literally as a standing upon the surface of the sea. But it is more fitting here and more in accord with the teaching of the entire passage to regard them as standing upon the edge of the sea, praising Him upon the throne and regarding the sea with its mingled fire, as prophesying a righteous doom upon the ungodly. The saved here are in contrast with the saved on the shore of the Red Sea in the days of Moses. **The harps of God.** We have had allusion to harps in 5 : 8; 14 : 2. As the temple had its sacred instruments, so heaven has its songs and joys peculiar to itself. They are harps fitted to worship God, worthy of God, belonging to God. There may

image, and over the number of his name, standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

be the meaning that they are great and glorious as belonging to God himself; everything in heaven far surpasses the things of earth. The harps of Miriam give place to the harps of God.

**3.** With the harps is the voice of song, sung by the redeemed from the earth. **They sing;** it is a present and continuous song. **Moses the servant of God.** When the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, having seen their own deliverance and the destruction of their foes, they sang a song (Exod. 15 : 2, 13). The great world power of the days of Moses was utterly overthrown. As the saints behold the sea mingled with fire, there is for them the assurance and prophecy that the world powers of their own day would, in like manner, be overthrown. The song they sing is like that of Moses; one of deliverance from powers that threaten to destroy them, one of destruction for their enemies. It was an act of redemption when God showed his power through Moses, who was, in a pre-eminent way, his servant. He is so called elsewhere (Exod. 14 : 31; Heb. 5 : 5; Num. 12 : 7). It is a term of the highest honor; Paul delighted to call himself a servant, a slave, of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1 : 1). **The song of the Lamb.** We are not to regard this song as composed of two parts, one song that of Moses, the other that of the Lamb. It is one undivided song, whose words are given in ver. 3, 4. The salvation wrought through Moses is of the same nature as that wrought through the Lamb. The same fatherly love of God was manifested in both Moses and Christ. The Angel of Jehovah (Gen. 22 : 15), who revealed himself in the Old Testament, was the Jesus of the New Testament. As the eternal Logos (John 1 : 1), he was at work in the world before his advent as the personal Christ (John 1 : 4, 14). The reference to Moses is occasioned by the consideration that the salvation about to be wrought by the Lamb, the Son of God, is of a

<sup>e</sup> Great and marvellous are thy works,  
—Lord God Almighty;  
<sup>f</sup> Just and true are thy ways,—thou  
King of saints.  
4 <sup>g</sup> Who shall not fear thee, O Lord,—  
and glorify thy name?  
For <sup>h</sup> thou only art holy:—for <sup>i</sup> all na-  
tions shall come and worship before  
thee; <sup>k</sup> For thy judgments are made  
manifest.

Great and wonderful are thy works,  
Lord God, the Almighty; righteous  
and true are thy ways, thou King of  
the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord,  
and glorify thy name? Because thou  
only art holy; because all the nations  
shall come and worship before thee;  
because thy righteous acts are made  
manifest.

<sup>e</sup> Ps. 111 : 2; 139 : 14.

<sup>f</sup> 16 : 7; Deut. 32 : 4; Ps. 145 : 17; Hosea 14 : 9.

<sup>g</sup> Exod. 15 : 14-16; Ps. 89 : 7; Jer. 10 : 7.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Sam. 2 : 2.

<sup>i</sup> 11 : 15; Ps. 86 : 9; Isa. 66 : 23; Mal. 1 : 11.

<sup>k</sup> 19 : 2; Ps. 97 : 8; 105 : 7.

nature like that wrought by Moses, the servant of God, in the Old Testament times; in both there was a world power, a struggling cause of God, a redemption manifested, a signal triumph, a song of deliverance. The beast cannot be Nero, as taught by many modern interpreters, for the Old Testament saints can sing this song equally with the New Testament saints. There began to be a redemption in the Old Testament times; the redemption is finished through Jesus Christ, the perfect servant of God. The salvation at the Red Sea, and the death on the cross, are both parts of one great redemptive love and plan. The words of the song are, **great . . . Almighty**, rather, *the Almighty*. The song covers all periods of time in both dispensations, recalling especially those works in which are manifested the preserving and redeeming power of God. They become him who is the Almighty. All his ways, his marvelous works, are **just**, rather, *righteous, and true* (Deut. 32 : 4; Ps. 144 : 17). When afflictions press on God's people, God seems to be forgetful, neglectful of moral distinctions among men. But when the end is seen, it will be apparent that in all the methods of the divine procedure God is righteous and true, true to his promise and his own holy nature. The Seventy-third Psalm was written for a man in trouble of mind over the apparent inequalities of life, the prosperity of the ungodly. In the end, the ways of the righteous are seen to be the ways of wisdom. God's holiness, without God's patience, would mean our destruction. **King of saints**, rather, *of ages*. He is the eternal King. This is a fitting designation to be ascribed to him here, inasmuch as all his acts, in both dispensations,

come under our vision. The misinterpretations in reference to God's administration arise from taking too small periods of time to consider. His righteousness is especially dwelt upon here because of that about to be revealed. The plagues are the revelations, not of his almighty, but of his holiness.

4. This verse continues the song of adoration. **Omit thee**. The first reason for the fear of God and the glorifying of his name arises from the consideration of his holiness. Because God is holy is a more controlling reason for his being worshiped than mere greatness. We might conceive of almighty being centered in a being destitute of moral goodness. The second reason is because of the manifestation of God's righteous **judgments**, rather, *acts*. They have been made manifest. The past tense showing them as done already in the past completely. The entire future may also be conceived of as so surely manifesting his righteousness that it is regarded as already past. The emphasis, in the song, rests on the righteousness of his dealings with men, both in preserving and punishing. This will be so seen by all that **all nations . . . before thee**. This is not asserted here as a declaration of the divine will. It is rather the hope, the desire, the expectation on the part of the saved that these righteous acts of God will so influence men as to turn them to God. That the expectation might receive its fulfilment it would not be needful that every man in every nation should be renewed in heart. In a general way no one welcomed Christ, though perhaps several thousand received him, during his personal ministry, as their Saviour (John 1 : 11). According to this

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, <sup>1</sup>the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened;

*L 11 : 19; Num. 1 : 50, 53.*

passage so many may be influenced by the manifestation of God's righteous acts that, in large numbers, they will worship God. Even while the bowls emptied upon those hardened in heart may result in making them yet harder, yet there are others upon whom these severities will have an opposite effect, awaking them and leading them in brokenness of heart to God. God can work through and upon every part of man's nature, using both tender ministries and severe judgments to move the hearts of men. God delights not in punishment for its own sake; it is called his strange work, utterly foreign to his nature, but sometimes a necessity for him (*Isa. 28 : 21*). It is thought by some that these words of the saints, these hopings on the part of all the saved, whether on earth or in heaven, may be realized, to a larger extent than the ages have ever witnessed, in the future ages of the church. It is generally the case that times of pestilence, of disaster, of great judgments, are times of great spiritual darkness. Afflictions, if rightly used, make the heart obedient; if wrongly used they tend to bitterness of heart and a fixed disobedience.

**5-8. THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THEIR BOWLS.** We have heard the song of the redeemed, proclaiming the righteous acts of God. We now have the seven angels receiving the bowls wherewith they may publicly manifest God's righteousness and power. From the innermost opened shrine of the temple the angels emerge, becoming the instruments of God's holy wrath. The penalties come, not by accident, but in due process of law, because God's holy laws have been broken. A smoke that renders the temple inaccessible to any accompanies the going forth of the angels, God thus adding terror to the scene. The days of mercy are now over, so that no one might intercede in the temple or make offerings for transgression.

**5. After . . . looked,** rather, *After these things I saw.* In the movement

of the sacred dramatic representation we have a sight first of the saved and redeemed throng (ver. 2-4); then of the fearful ministrations of the angels with their plagues, revealing God's wrath. The eye and the ear of the seer are both attent on the scene. **Behold.** This is to be omitted. **Tabernacle.** In the wilderness the tabernacle was the movable temple of God. For several centuries this was the symbolic dwelling-place of God until the days of Solomon, when a temple was built for his worship. Thenceforth this place was the center of the Jewish worship. But the memory of that tabernacle was enshrined in the phrase, **temple of the tabernacle.** This term cannot be applied to the outer court, but the reference is to the inner shrine, the dwelling-place, as it were, of God himself, with the attendant cloud of glory. We are dealing here with the most sacred things, the going forth of the angels on their mission of avenging God's broken laws. In 11 : 19 the temple was opened, but the purpose of the opened temple differs here from that of the former occasion. In that vision was a sight of the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's grace and mercy. God was revealed as a covenant-keeping God. The vision was, therefore, one of grace to God's people, including also, at the same time, the keeping of his word to those breaking the covenant. Here the eye rests on the **testimony**, that is, the tables of stone, on which were written the Ten Commandments. These tables of testimony bear witness to God's holiness; they are the revelations of his righteous will. It is because men have broken these statutes that the angels now go forth on their errand of severity. Stephen speaks of the "tabernacle of witness" (*Acts 7 : 44*). In Exod. 31 : 18 the stones are called the "tables of testimony." No one can break God's laws with impunity. In time the holy angels will go forth on their visitations of punishment. **Opened.** It was a marvelous event, the opening of the holy places, reserved

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

6 and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, clothed with a pure, bright stone, and girded about the breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls, full of the

m 1 : 13 ; Exod. 28 : 5-8 ; Ezek. 44 : 17, 18.

n Dan. 10 : 5.

o 4 : 6.

p 16 : 2, etc.; Ps. 75 : 8.

in the Old Testament times for the eyes of the priests and high priests alone. Inasmuch as all are now priests of God it is fitting to open them to the gaze of all believers.

**6. And . . . temple,** rather, *And there came out of the temple.* The angels come forth from the holy of holies where God alone has his dwelling-place. The meaning is, therefore, that they come with the divine approval. The penalties brought by them will not be something apart from God's sanction, but having his approval. Their work will be one of judgment mainly, for it is as the ministers of God's wrath that they come forth. God's laws obeyed are a pledge of security and blessing, but disobeyed they bring God's judgments. Everywhere in the Old Testament, when God announced himself as the God of his covenant people, this relationship involved always the punishment of the ungodly (Ps. 80 : 8; 90 : 13; 110 : 6). The seven angels alluded to in ver. 1 are now fully seen; the number **seven** implying that the series of judgments here announced will be perfect in their nature, accomplishing perfectly the work designed. Their office is that of administering the plagues. These angels have a priestly office, as shown in their garments and in their girdles. **Clothed in pure and white linen.** The Revised version renders, *Arrayed with precious stone pure and bright.* So also the Improved Bible Union version. Both put "in linen" in the margin. A change of one letter in the Greek makes the difference between linen and stone. The high priest wore a garment set with twelve precious stones on his breast. In Ezek. 28 : 13 the king of Tyre is described as covered with precious stones. The representation here is that these angels are covered with precious stones as with a garment. As a rule the angels are described as clothed with linen pure and white

(Acts 10 : 30; Matt. 17 : 2; Rev. 19 : 8). The **golden girdle** reminds one of the vision of the Son of man so clothed (1 : 18). The thought here may be that the angels are so far superior to the high priests of earth that, while clothed in the ordinary priestly garments, they are so far superior to the high priests of earth that their garments are covered with jewels. God's angels are worthy of God in their appearance and character.

**7. The work of the angels** is pointed out, and they are commissioned for their work by one of the **four beasts**, rather, *living creatures.* We have had references in this book already to these living creatures sixteen times; repeatedly they join with the redeemed in singing praises to the Father and to the Lamb. They display an interest in redemption. If they be looked upon as the representatives of the entire creation then, as the bowls are to be poured out upon all departments of nature, the sun, the earth, the rivers, and fountains, it is fitting that these representatives of nature shall give their approval to this work. God works through creation with its manifold laws, which may become the channels through which his anger may be made manifest. Nature itself also, when redemption shall have finished its work, shall be delivered from the bondage into which it passed by the fall. (See Rom. 8 : 21.) If the living creatures be the highest created beings, then the vision teaches that they, standing for all good intelligences, coincide with God in his punishments about to be brought upon the nations of the ungodly. **Vials,** rather, *bowls.* These are vessels broad and shallow, resembling our saucers. They are the basons of the Old Testament (Exod. 12 : 22). They were used to carry the incense lighted with coals from the altar in the holy place. They are fitted, therefore, to represent a sudden and full punish-

full of the wrath of God, who liveth 8 for ever and ever. 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.

<sup>q</sup> 4 : 9; 10 : 6; 1 Thess. 1 : 9.

<sup>r</sup> Exod. 40 : 34; 1 Kings 8 : 10; 2 Chron. 5 : 14; Ps. 18 : 9; Isa. 6 : 4.

<sup>s</sup> Exod. 40 : 35; 2 Chron. 5 : 14.

wrath of God, who lives forever and 8 ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no one was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

ment, that can be poured out at once upon the ungodly in the earth. There is a wide contrast between the bowls of wrath and the bowls full of odors, the prayers of saints (5 : 8). **Wrath of God.** Man's anger is usually malicious, passionate, vengeful. God's wrath is the necessary manifestation of a holy nature against the unholy and the wicked. Real holiness must be antagonistic to that which is wrong in itself. The wrath of God does not come to its full manifestation until the opportunity to forgive and save is past. Jesus came not to destroy, but to save (John 3 : 17); but he will consign the finally impenitent to everlasting punishment. There is a wrath of the Lamb (6 : 16). God is love, but God has wrath. God manifests his wrath through the angels, which here represent ministries of all kinds, whether they be the activities of nature, or the retributive laws of conscience. God can make his angels out of men or laws or things. This wrath may be perpetual, for God is an ever-living God.

**8.** The angels having received the bowls proceed at once to pour them out. The scene is one of terror. In vision John beholds the temple filled with **smoke**. This smoke is not that arising from the burning incense, which is the symbol of praise and prayer ascending to God as a sweet savor. It is not the cloud of glory which at times filled the temple, as when Isaiah had a vision of Jehovah (Isa. 6 : 4), or as when the temple was dedicated to God (1 Kings 8 : 11). It is here rather the smoke that is conceived of as coming from the fire of God's anger. A fitting illustration is found in Exod. 19 : 19, when smoke covered Mount Sinai when the commandments were given. God has begun his retributive work, has come in penalty; the smoke symbolizes this teaching. **No man . . . temple.**

This, in vision, is the announcement that their doom is past intercession, the penalty is fixed. God is easy to be entreated, and plenteous in mercy (Ps. 80 : 15); the high priest entered the holiest of all yearly, making intercession for the sins of the people. But there comes a time when God's wrath is manifest, and he will not listen to intercession. Notice the impressive statements in Deut. 32 : 49-51; Jer. 15 : 1. **Fulfilled**, rather, **finished**. God cannot be approached when he is manifesting himself in this fearful manner. When God sits as judge no one may intercede. The laws of nature are helpful to men if used aright, but these laws have no mercy if disobeyed. We are exhorted to kiss the Son while opportunity is given (Ps. 2 : 12). The plagues are now about to receive the beginning of their fulfilment; the time comes, in the order of events, when the plagues will cease. When the wrathful ministries of God's holy indignation shall be withdrawn by these ministries coming to an end, then the temple will again be open for intercession. The vision brings out clearly into view this teaching—God's holy and heavy penalties will assuredly come upon the ungodly; nothing can restrain them. God's longsuffering will pass into God's retributive justice.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. God's nature is so manifold and perfect that to each one will come that which is fitted to his character. Heaven means the perfect fulness of his rewards. Penalty here, in its full sense, and hell hereafter come to the one whose iniquities are full (ver. 1).

2. Satan is strong, but not too strong to be overcome by any saint, with God's help. Jesus was an overcoming Christ that he might be a helping Saviour (ver. 2).

3. God is king of the ages. He is fitted to carry out his everlasting plans, because he has all ages in which to work. No wicked man, living for one age, can defeat God, whose dwelling-place is in eternity (ver. 3).

4. God's almighty is under the control of his holiness. Because he is holy, penalties must come on the ungodly. God's manifested righteousness means wicked men put down and righteous men crowned with God's approval (ver. 4).

5. The commands of God bear testimony to his character and our duties. They were kept in the holiest of all; they should be enshrined to-day in our innermost heart. The tables of stone are lost. But God's laws are written on the heart, and contained in the holy Scriptures (ver. 5).

6. God's ministers are clothed in beautiful garments. Every Christian should be clothed upon as a priest of God to intercede for men. The Christian has put on Christ as a covering, a creed, a rule of daily conduct (ver. 6; Gal. 3 : 27).

7. God's mercy means a salvation provided for the guilty; God's delay means our salvation (2 Peter 3 : 15). God's wrath means an utter destruction for the wicked. No one is compelled to be lost, it is a matter of choice (ver. 7).

8. There is a sin unto death (1 John 5 : 16). There is a time when the door is shut (Matt. 25 : 10); when intercession has no promise (ver. 8).

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES. We come now to the pouring out of the contents of the bowls upon the enemies of God wherever situated. We see the fearful effects of these plagues upon God's foes. In one continuous order, they follow each other; no breathing time is given for these foes to recover themselves. This is the third time that the scer is going over the same events. It is evident that we have a threefold representation of a contest of God's forces with the satanic hosts from the similarity of the structure of the three series of visions. In many respects there is a noticeable likeness between the three series; there is a complete conformity in the objects subject to God's visitation in the trumpets and the bowls. In all the series there is a division of the seven visions into two groups; the first group of four, the second group of three. Between these two groups there is in all the series a marked dividing line. A glance at the first four visions in the three series will make this plain:

### SEALS.

#### CHAPTER VI.

- 1.(6:2)
- 2.(6:3) affecting the earth.
- 3.(6:5)
- 4.(6:7)

### TRUMPETS.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

- 1.(8: 7)
- 2.(8: 8)
- 3.(8:10)
- 4.(8:12)

### BOWLS.

#### CHAPTER XVI.

- 1.(16:2) earth.
- 2.(16:7) sea.
- 3.(16:4) affecting the rivers.
- 4.(16:8) sun.

In all cases the earth, in its entirety of land and sea, the sun as the source of life and strength, the fountains and rivers which are essential to the existence of life, all these are affected. The same objects are represented and in the same order. In all the series there is a

break at the fifth number. At this number we pass from earth, with its physical objects, to look upon the spirit world; we get a glimpse of the unseen world—unseen to the eye, but really existing. This is made apparent by a glance at the fifth number.

### SEALS.

6 : 9.

An altar in heaven.

### TRUMPETS.

9 : 11.

The pit of the abyss.

### BOWLS.

16 : 10.

The throne of the beast.

The series of the trumpets and the bowls differ from that of the seals, in that they are far more minute than the seals, entering into details. They are explanatory of the more general statements of the seals.

There is the unclean woman, the parody of the pure woman, clothed in white, the bride of Christ (17:3). We may expect a greater similarity between the series of the trumpets and the bowls than between the seals and the other two; the trumpets and bowls deal mainly with penalty. The complete similarity between the trumpets and the bowls is manifest.

## SIXTH NUMBER.

## TRUMPETS.

9 : 13.

The river Euphrates.

## BOWLS.

16 : 12.

The river Euphrates.

## SEVENTH NUMBER.

## TRUMPETS.

11 : 15.

The end of all things.

## BOWLS.

16 : 17.

The end of all things.

All three groups bring us to the end when the Judge appears. In the seals the end comes in 8:1. The Judge appears; the Lamb in his wrath and the silence indicate that all opposition has broken down. In the trumpets the dead are raised and the kingdom has become Christ's in 11:15. In the bowls there comes the cry, "It is finished," in 16:17. It must be evident that these are different aspects of substantially the same course of procedure, the same parties standing in a different relation to each other in the different series. In the interpretation of the visions in this series of the bowls no attempt will be made to find a distinct and literal event, or some distinct spiritual teaching for each detail of the representation. All such attempts have been failures in the past; they all must be in the very nature of the case. These visions are intended to give to us poetic and scenic prophecies, to present in a highly figurative way general outlines of God's dealings with his enemies both inside the church and outside of it. The expressions are designed to be general in their character. God purposed to destroy his foes utterly. He does this in a spiritual way, just as if he were to touch every part of man's outward life, the earth, the sea, the river, the sun, the atmosphere, with the blight of his curse. Were God to touch the physical world in this way, all life would become bitter and intolerable. These visions express, in a figurative way, the fearful woes that God will bring to pass upon his foes. These woes may not, of necessity, be

mainly physical or material in their nature, for God has all resources at his command. Man's entire surroundings, his social life, his intellectual nature, his moral nature, his political relations, may all of them be made agencies through which God will bring fearful miseries upon the wicked as the result of their wickedness. The one great fact stands before us here in these visions, that God, because he is holy, will bring heaviest judgments upon his foes as overwhelming as if he were to make the land and sun and waters their inveterate enemies. God smites once and again the things on which life and its happiness rest; the means of life he makes burdensome. Under these attacks the ungodly world stands utterly helpless. The seven plagues are an expression, in detail, of the vision of the vintage, the destruction of the wicked in 14:18-20.

In like manner we find, in ver. 6, an anticipative allusion to the destruction of Babylon, the details of which are given in 18:24. In ver. 14 we have also an anticipative allusion to the great war between holiness and unholiness, noticed fully in 19:17-21. In ver. 19 we have a reference to the destruction of the great Babylon, the full mention of which fills up chap. XVII and XVIII. In ver. 20 we have the great day simply alluded to, and described more fully in 20:11-15. This is one of the features of this book, to make mention of an incident or teaching, and then afterward enter upon the more full consideration of it. The chapter falls naturally into two divisions, the

*The seven bowls of plagues poured out.*

**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

t 9 : 13; 18 : 4; 19 : 5.

u 15 : 1.

x 14 : 10; 15 : 7.

y 8 : 7; Isa. 8 : 22.

z Exod. 9 : 9-11; Deut. 28 : 35.

vision of the first four bowls, the visions of the final group of three.

In the first division we have the bowls emptied on the earth, the sea, the springs, the sun (ver. 2-9); in the second, the bowls are emptied on the throne of the beast, upon the Euphrates, upon the air, and great Babylon falls (ver. 11-21).

**1-9. THE FIRST FOUR BOWLS.** These four bowls have reference to the earth and its immediate surroundings. The earth, the sea, the waters, the sun, become sources of plagues. All of these are a necessity to the physical life of man; here they are touched successively with God's blighting power.

**1.** This verse is introductory, the commission is given to the seven angels to fulfil their mission. This verse shows that the work of the angels is not a mere revengeful putting forth of power, but is the work of Jehovah himself. **Heard . . . temple.** The voice is that of God himself. The people on the earth struggle in vain unless God come to their assistance. God now interposes in their behalf. Milton calls upon God to interpose on behalf of his persecuted saints:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints,  
whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold.

**Go . . . ways,** rather, *Go ye.* The temple filled with smoke (15 : 8) prevents the entrance of any person there, God alone dwells there; it is his voice that the seer hears. **Vials, rather, bowls.** These have in them **the wrath of God.** A holy God must have the power to exercise wrath. There may be a restraint during a time of probation; during a period of the ripening of the harvest, there comes a time for the manifestation of the wrath. Pun-

ishments do not come in their fulness until iniquities have also reached their fulness (Gen. 15 : 16; comp. Rev. 14 : 18). God permits sin and wrong-doing to continue and grow, but he does not approve. His existence is a continued protest against all wrong. He bears patiently with it; but shows, at the last, his disapproval, and sends his judgments. **Upon the earth, rather, into the earth.** The expression is more intense than simply to cast something on the surface. The same expression is used in 8 : 5, where the angel casts fire into the earth. The angels waiting expectantly to know his will, proceed at once to perform their mission. As the scene takes place in vision, John beholds them standing in such a relation to the earth that they can pour their bowls into it.

**2. The first bowl. The first . . . earth.** The angel takes a position, in the vision, from which he may do as bidden. In ver. 1 the term *earth* is used as a general description of the entire world, the earth and the sea embracing all. Here it is used for the part occupied by man, the part opposed to sea. **And . . . sore, rather, and it became a noisome and grievous sore.** The historical foundation for this is found in the sixth plague (Exod. 9 : 10), when ulcers came upon the Egyptians. The world beast, mentioned in 13 : 11, came up out of the earth. This beast is explained by many to mean the Antichrist, mainly centered in the papal apostasy. It is doubtful whether we are to find a symbolic or spiritual meaning in the terms here employed. The rather may we simply take the general teaching that God attacks every part of man's surroundings, the foundations of his existence. The earth and springs and sun constitute the physical essentials of human life and happiness. To destroy them is to destroy life, to

the men <sup>a</sup> which had the mark of the beast, and upon them <sup>b</sup> which worshipped his image.

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

*a* 13 : 15-18.

*b* 13 : 14.

*c* 8 : 8.

the men who had the mark of the beast, and who worshiped his image.

<sup>3</sup> And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood, as of a dead man; and every living soul died, the things that were in the sea.

Infringe on their operations is to place limitations on life. Under these figures John means to assert that God makes a warfare upon man that cannot be resisted. The historical and allegorical interpretations vary exceedingly, and are unsatisfactory. The second beast compelled the earthly minded to receive the mark of the first beast in their right hand and in their forehead, and to make and worship the image of the beast. By the retributive power of the divine justice the ungodly men have another mark put upon them, ulcers and sores. This is not to be taken literally. We cannot take the sixth vision of this series in a literal way, nor can we this. All are founded on the same plan, all are to be interpreted in the same way. The meaning is that God begins, through the seven plagues, to make life unbearable to the ungodly, causing those who found their enjoyment in certain modes of life, to find these sources of enjoyment turned into mockeries. They worshiped the beast and had his mark; God gives them ulcerous sores, painful, noisome. God is stronger than the beast; he puts his mark upon the worshipers of the beast. For the mark see 13 : 15; 14 : 9. The first bowl teaches that God will, in time, openly make the lives of those identified with Satan and worldliness intolerable and loathsome even to themselves. God will curse their blessings. God could make every sinful life physically burdened as was the life of Job (Job 2 : 7). God will make life as burdensome as if he were to touch men's bodies with painful sores. There may not be any physical affliction to make this vision come true in its completeness, for oftentimes the severest punishments are not material, but mental. Remorse, disappointment, the sense of guilt, the certain fearful looking for of judgment (Heb. 10 : 27), these are more intolerable than mere bodily sufferings.

**3. The second bowl.** Without a break the second angel performs his mission. This bowl is emptied into the sea. This vision, with the former, comprehends the entire surface of the earth. Those who find a spiritual meaning in all these terms interpret the *sea* to mean the worldly life of States and nations, the impulses and passions of the masses of the people. On this theory the land stands for the fixed order of nations, alluding especially to the Jewish nation, the sea standing for the restless mass of outside Gentile nations. It is out of the sea that the ten-horned beast arises (13 : 1). Without giving the term *sea* any metaphorical meaning, it may be regarded as embracing with the term earth (ver. 2) the whole life of man. God will make the whole life, the entire worldly existence of the ungodly burdensome to him. He will find no rest anywhere. On sea and on land God will be his enemy. **Became . . . man**, rather, *it became blood as of a dead man*. In 8 : 8 one-third of the sea became blood, here all is changed into blood. It is not simply blood, but the clotted offensive blood of a dead man, horrible to look upon. The sea, which ordinarily is a scene of beauty and grandeur, health-giving, a means of pleasure and business association, is changed into a thing corrupt and corrupting. It is no longer a source of help, but a hindrance and a curse. As a result, **every . . . died**, rather, *every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea*. In 8 : 9 one-third died, here it was the reign of a universal death. For a historical foundation of this vision see Exod. 7 : 20, the first plague in Egypt. Pharaoh was an illustration of the world power of his day; God took from him the use of the Nile, in which he trusted. The teaching of this bowl is that God will so afflict the ungodly as if he should change the material sea into a noisome

- 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, <sup>b</sup>Thou art righteous, O Lord, <sup>i</sup>which art, and wast, and shalt be,

f 8 : 10, 11.

g Exod. 7 : 20.

- 4 And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers, and the fountains of 5 the waters; and it became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art, and who wast, the holy One, because thou

h 15 : 3.

i 1 : 4, 8; 4 : 8; 11 : 17.

mass of clotted blood; that what had been a source of blessing should become a fearful curse. In this manner God can make the social life, the political life, the business relations of men, the ties binding society together, these things essential to the well-being of man, God can make them, through the perverted hearts of men, become a source of untold woes to men. Many events in history will be found that find their prophetic description in this vision. It will, however, serve its best purpose by allowing it to have only a general meaning that God can cause that things of beauty, and things on which they depend, shall become sources of horror and hostility. It shall be ill with the wicked; this the vision teaches in a most forcible but figurative way. John does not aim to write history or give minute details. Where he is silent we may not seem to be wise.

**4, 5. The third bowl.** The entire surface of the earth, land and sea, having been put under a curse in the two preceding bowls, God's anger now rests upon specific portions of their physical life. **Vial, bowl, upon rivers and fountains**, rather, *into*. Something of the same kind took place in connection with the third trumpet, when the third part of the waters were made bitter, and many died from the effects. Here all the waters are turned into blood. The statement is that *it* became blood, not that they were changed into blood. Meyer suggests that the blood flowed into the streams, rendering them, of course, unfit for use. The historical foundation for this is found in Exod. 7 : 20, when the Nile was turned into blood. We may not attempt to find any prophetical allusion to any definite event in any part of the world's history. In Egypt God touched one part of nature after another, making use of nature to bring Pharaoh into subjection, cutting off one avenue of enjoyment and life after another, so that he was compelled to

surrender. In like manner here, in a figurative way, John sees God making the life of the ungodly exceeding bitter by changing the things on which they depended for life and enjoyment, into sources of loathing. The reference is not to literal rivers and fountains, but to things in the life as essential to them as these are to the physical life. God caused the proud heart of Pharaoh to melt into submission, the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to become humble. God's retributive laws, whereby sin becomes its own punishment, have often rendered life so burdensome that it has not seemed worth living; hence departed from life. It is a picture like this that John brings before us. The angel who presides over the waters is the first to recognize the righteousness of the manifestation of the divine wrath. Those who interpret the angel of the waters to mean the angel who poured the bowl into the waters, are incorrect. Meyer contends that a definite angel is meant, to whom has been assigned this province of nature, just as in Daniel a particular angel is put in charge of a definite people (Dan. 10 : 13-21). It is better to regard the angel as purely a symbolic being who is introduced in this scenic representation as the voice of the waters themselves. The waters themselves, upon whom the judgments have come, respond to the judgment that it is just. Even the enemies of God will, in the end, admit the justice and equity of God's moral administration. The words of the angel are, **Thou . . . judged**, rather, *Righteous art thou which art, and which wast, thou holy One, because thou didst judge*. God is holy in nature, and therefore righteous in his dealings with men. The expression, **and shalt be**, describing God, is to be omitted, for the reason that God has now come, is manifested in judgment. Special emphasis is laid in this book upon God's perfect righteousness, inasmuch as so often his dealings as judge are

6 because thou hast judged thus. For <sup>k</sup>they have shed the blood <sup>l</sup>of saints and prophets, <sup>m</sup>and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another <sup>n</sup>out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty,

<sup>o</sup>true and righteous are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial <sup>p</sup>upon the sun: <sup>q</sup>and power was given unto him to scorch men with

6 didst thus judge; because they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink: they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Even so, Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth poured out his bowl on the sun; and it was given to it to

*k* 6 : 10, 11; 13 : 15; 17 : 6; Matt. 23 : 34, 35.

*l* 11 : 18; 18 : 20.

*m* Isa. 49 : 26.

*n* 6 : 9.

*o* 13 : 10; 14 : 10; 19 : 2.

*p* 6 : 12; 8 : 12.

*q* 9 : 17, 18; 14 : 18; Isa. 66 : 16.

represented. The almighty God is less dwelt upon than his holiness and righteousness.

6. This verse is an anticipation of 18 : 20-24, where Babylon is destroyed; it shows the righteousness of God in turning the waters into blood. **Shed . . . drink**, rather, *poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood thou hast given them to drink*. This reveals a time of persecution for God's people and God's leaders among men, for which God now sends a punishment in kind. They had shed blood, they must now drink blood. They persecuted God's people; God now punishes them on account of his people. **Prophets**. This alludes, not to Old Testament prophets as such, but to the interpreters and unfolders of God's will in the New Testament times. (See Eph. 4 : 11.) **For . . . worthy**, rather, *they are worthy*. The ungodly have merited their punishment. God's people shall walk in heaven in white, for they are worthy (3 : 4); these are worthy of penalty. God always judges according to character. No person will be saved on account of his works, but no person will be saved apart from his works. Every person suffering eternal loss will be deserving of it.

7. **Heard . . . altar**, rather, *I heard the altar*. The altar itself, in the vision, speaks. This is the altar mentioned in 6 : 9, under which the souls of the martyrs were resting. They had cried unto God for the exerting of his retributive power. Now that it has come they see that God's judgments are true and righteous. He is praised as the almighty God, whose actions correspond with his holy character and his promises; he is true. In

ver. 5 the ungodly recognize God's righteousness; here the church of Christ recognizes his righteous dealings. The prayers and sacrifices offered on the altar often seem powerless to bring about results. But, in the end, the prayers will be answered, and the sacrifices find acceptance. The altar is a source of great power with God, and in the end in the affairs of the world. From the days of righteous Abel the blood of all the martyrs has cried for retribution, and God's law is that blood is the punishment for shedding blood.

8. **The fourth bowl**. Men, that is, the ungodly portion of the world, have been touched in all parts of their life and surroundings, represented by the land, the sea, the waters. Now God touches the sun, the source of life and heat and motion. **Upon the sun**. In the fourth trumpet (8 : 12) the third part of the sun was affected; here the entire body of the sun is touched. There is a growing intensity in the judgment as we come toward the end. We find a historical basis for this vision in Exod. 10 : 21-23, where the sun refused to give its light, and darkness settled down on Egypt. Here, on the other hand, the sun has added power, and scorches and burns men with its intense heat. **Give unto him**, rather, *unto it*, that is the sun. Nothing could be more intolerable than a burning, scorching sun, that should wither and torture men and things. Those who find a spiritual meaning in all the terms employed, interpret this vision as depicting the abuses of revelation, compared to the sun, whereby the teachings of revelation become, through their perversion, a source of peril and death. In this way God's best gifts,

**9** fire. 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.

**9** scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, who has the authority over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

r Ver. 11, 21; Isa. 8:21.

s 9:20; Exod. 8:15; Dan. 5:22, 23.

t 11:13; 14:7.

salvation by faith, the wideness of God's mercy, the freedom from the law as a means of salvation—these all may be perverted into agencies for destruction. Others interpret the added power of the sun to indicate a fearful oppressive tyranny on the part of the rulers of the people. Without attempting to find any special meaning in this vision, it will have a large teaching for us of God punishing men in all parts of their life—mental, spiritual, social, political, just as if in the physical world he were to add a fierce power to the sun in the heavens. If God were to darken the sun, all life would soon perish. If God were to make the sun a fiery furnace it would soon, in like manner, destroy all men and all life. In some way like this God will bring his retributive powers to bear upon the wicked in all the parts and surroundings of their existence, in the last days.

**9.** They were scorched with heat. As a result they **blasphemed . . . God**, rather, *blasphemed the name of the God*. Back of the plagues they recognized God. Instead of turning to God in repentance and obedience they blasphemed God, reproached him, hardened their heart with an additional hatred. It is implied that the sun has this added scorching power on account of their increased wickedness. While suffering under this heavy visitation they add to their wickedness by a growing impiety and hardness of heart. For a like effect of punishment see 9:2; for the opposite effect, the changed heart on account of God's retribution, see 11:13. There is no power in punishment as such to transform the heart. Pharaoh constantly grew more fixed in his purpose to resist God with each added plague. Even when he submitted, for a time, the heart was not radically changed. Punishment in hell will have no tendency to make it a heaven. Only God's Spirit, and the thorough repentance

for sin because it is sin, can work out a change in the inner life. Byron writes of

Souls who dare look the Omnipotent  
tyrant in  
His everlasting face and tell him that  
His evil is not good.

Penalty did not lead to repentance, so that God might be recognized as such and receive their homage. Not to worship God is a mark of the hardened heart.

The general sense in these four visions is obvious: the men whose souls continued to reject the truth that they might continue to live in conformity with the plans of the world, would find the entire circle of worldly powers and influences turned into instruments of destruction. From the world in its settled state, from the convulsions and agitations of the world, from those things that naturally contribute to comfort, from all these tormenting and injurious effects would come. These recurring visitations of disaster, with increasing power, would show clearly that nothing could be gained by opposing God; they would show how helpless the world is to oppose God when he rises in his might; they would show that the world, in its sin, has against it the holiness and might of God. God's penalties come, of necessity, against wrong-doing because it deserves punishment; if rightly used penalties would lead to an opened vision of the moral nature, and a return to God in humility and repentance.

**10-21. THE LAST THREE BOWLS.** We now pass from the judgments upon material things to the judgment upon the spiritual foes and forces. A like transition occurs at the fifth seal (6:9), and at the fifth trumpet (9:1), when the bottomless pit was opened. Here the throne of Satan's agent in the world is smitten (ver. 10-21). Satan's power is mighty, but not almighty.

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, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and

10 And the fifth poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, be-

u 13 : 2; 17 : 9, 17, 18.

x 9 : 2.

y 11 : 10; Zech. 14 : 12.

z Ver. 9, 21.

**10. The fifth bowl. Seat of the beast, rather, throne.** The dragon, that is, Satan, gave his throne to the beast (13 : 2). Satan planned to do his work among men through the agency of the beast, the great world powers, the spirit of worldliness in whatever shape it be found; it is to exercise his power. There is a real power exercised by Satan on the earth, represented by *throne*. Satan is called the god of this world (2 Cor. 4 : 4). To pour out the bowl upon the throne of the beast is to send judgments upon the agencies of Satan in the world, whereby their effectiveness and power are restrained. In all countries Satan does his work, but he may work with special effectiveness in particular places or countries where his strongholds are. (Comp. 2 : 13.) There is a noticeable advance over the fifth trumpet, where the hosts of the bottomless pit issue to torment men. Here the king himself is attacked and plagued. By *throne* no particular city is meant, but the ruling agencies of Satan in the world, wherever they are found, the actual center of his entire earthly influence. If Satan be entrenched in the selfishness and aggrandizement of the great world powers, in politics whereby laws are corrupted, in social intercourse whereby the spiritual life is weakened, in business relations so that the good are hindered in their material life (13 : 17); wherever Satan has his throne the plague comes upon his rule. **Kingdom is darkened.** The historical allusion is to Exod. 10 : 21, where darkness came upon Egypt with the result that business must stop, social intercourse be interfered with, and joy depart from life. The figure here is that of a darkness as of an eclipse of the sun coming upon a kingdom with all its attendant ills. It is as if the blighting effects of a moral bewilderment and a joyless condition should settle upon Satan's dominion on the earth. If an outward darkness prevailed, disorder, confusion,

and crime would increase, health would pass away. Here John, in vision, sees confusion, disorder, unrest, disunity of action coming upon Satan's kingdom in the world. Moral darkness is always an incident and picture of sin; God's kingdom is light, while Satan's kingdom is darkness. Satan, as the prince of darkness, is smitten with the plague of darkness. The main thought here is that of the confusion and weakness that result from the disappearance of that element of life by which enterprise and conquest are made possible. Satan's kingdom suffers an eclipse whereby weakness, alarm, and panic ensue. **Gnawed . . . pain.** The darkness is itself a plague, but the pain and sores cannot result from darkness unless hunger and famine set in as the result of a darkened condition of life. It is better to regard the pains and the sores as occasioned by the second bowl (ver. 2). The effect of the first bowl did not pass away when the second plague came upon them. These last plagues are not separated from each other by a distinct dividing line, but they are cumulative, each one heaped upon the preceding. Each one added to the preceding its own distress and torment. We cannot, therefore, understand these plagues in any literal way, nor can we refer them to distinct historical events. Jesus joins the gnashing of teeth with the punishment of hell, occasioned partly by pain and by the disappointment of their hopes mingled with their rage. Meyer notices that these plagues are more intense than the plagues in the former series, inasmuch as each one is combined with the preceding. In this view the four preceding plagues may be yet operative while the fifth is in progress.

**11. The effect of the fifth plague is the same as in the fourth plague (ver. 9).** **Heaven.** Inasmuch as the darkness has come upon them from God, the light being hidden, they reproach the **God of heaven.** They recog-

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.

a 9 : 14.

b Isa. 42 : 15; Jer. 50 : 38-40; 51 : 36.

cause of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

**12** And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings, who come from the rising of the sun, might be prepared.

c Isa. 11 : 11, 12, 16; Zech. 10 : 6-11.

nize the work as the work of God; they notice his might and his holiness, but they hate him and blaspheme him. They regard the pains simply as pains, not as the fruits of their own sinning. J. A. Smith thinks that this vision has reference to the Roman Antichrist, the papacy. Fairbairn thinks that the comfortless, ignorant, deluded, and enslaved condition of papal kingdoms generally during the dark ages, formed the most extensive and striking exemplification of the vision. It is wiser not to attempt to fix upon any definite announcement as portrayed in the vision. It is better to regard it only in a general way, as a prophecy in outline of what may find illustration in many countries in many ages, but finding its fullest meaning in the disasters upon the wicked in the last periods. For these plagues are the *last plagues* (15 : 1) which God reserves for the last, that he may, through them, utterly break down the power of the ungodly.

**12. The sixth bowl. And the sixth angel.** Omit **angel**, as also in ver. 3, 4, 8, 10. **Great river Euphrates**, rather, *the great river, the river Euphrates*. We have met with this name before in 9 : 14. It had great significance for the Jewish people, for it was the dividing line between their nation and the formidable kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon. To them it was The River. John notices in the vision the size, the location of the river, and the kings prepared to cross it. Hence he recognizes it as the river Euphrates. It was from the Euphrates, in the sixth trumpet (9 : 14-21), that the countless hosts of Satan came to destroy the third of men. The river was a defense to Israel, preventing the irreligion and idolatry of the countries beyond from flowing over and destroying the life of the chosen people. In this vision the **water thereof was dried up**. The purpose of this drying up was that . . . prepared, rather, *that the way*

*might be made ready for the kings that came from the sun rising*. Who are these kings? whence came they? for what purpose? Are they hostile to Christ or friends of Christ? It is held by some that these kings are friendly to God's cause, representing the conversion of the Jewish people to Christ. This is argued from the use of the expression *sun rising*, which appears also in 7 : 12; and from the drying up of the river, which elsewhere, as at the Red Sea and Jericho, was in behalf of Israel. But it is better to regard them as a part of the kings of the earth (ver. 14) gathered together for the mighty conflict against God. It is in harmony with the spirit of the last plagues, which are full of the wrath of God that brings destruction to the foes of God. Nowhere here do we find the friends of God, but the enemies only. The meaning of the vision is that the enemies of God find nothing in their way that proves to be a hindrance to them in their march. The great river Euphrates is to them just as if it were dried up before them. In days when there were almost no bridges, a great river presented a mighty obstacle to armies. Almost all the danger for centuries for the Israelitish people came from beyond this river. Hence the drying up of this river, in vision, is seized upon as a type of the removal of all hindrances to the gathering together of the enemies of Christ. These kings come as types of all the forces from every quarter to make war upon Christ's cause. They come as **kings** against the one who is in reality King of kings and Lord of lords (19 : 16). They appear as leaders of the inhabitants of the whole earth, instruments of the dragon and the beast, who go to make war, not against Babylon, but against believers.

**13.** This verse reveals the means employed by Satan and his agents to overthrow God's cause on the earth.

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

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

*d* 2 Thess. 2 : 9-11; 1 Tim. 4 : 1-3; 1 John 4 : 1-3.

*e* 12 : 3, 9.

*f* 19 : 20; 20 : 10.

They embrace, in reality, all that can rise up against Christ and his church. John sees the things noted in this verse; he hears nothing, but the meaning is plain. The three great and abiding foes of Christ are the dragon, the beast, the false prophet. Back of all, and first of all, is the dragon standing for Satan. Satan is not all-powerful or all-knowing, but he is revealed as a being of great power, full of wiles, of great master-mindedness and malice. The beast is that fearful monster rising out of the sea with its seven heads and ten horns (13 : 1). He is the figure of the world's business and power, the world's governments, and the system of outward things that Satan can make use of to oppose Christ. It may be worldliness, tyranny, politics, persecution. The false prophet is the second beast rising out of the earth with its two horns (13 : 11). It is plausible, deceptive, lamblike in appearance, but beastlike in nature and in alliance. It works in behalf of the first beast. It stands for the education, the polish and culture, the science and knowledge, the philosophy and sophistry, and especially for the false conceptions of religion, the combination of religion with worldliness and unspirituality. These three are pictures of all that Satan does by means of all his agencies in the world. These are not persons, not literal things, they are pictures of the great currents of influence that Satan makes use of to pervert Christ's true religion, and to break down Christ's cause in the world. **Three unclean spirits.** These do not refer to three definite persons, as even Luther thought. They are pictures, in vision, of all the forms of Satan's working, especially toward the end. Satan stirs up men to a hatred of the truth, to a distrust of God, to a love for present and seen things. He tempted the first parents to a dislike of God on account of the limitations of life. This is the spirit that issues from Satan's mouth. The beast and false prophet emit unclean spirits. The meaning is that the

powers and forces of the world, the learning and science of the world, the seeming religion that is mainly outward, that is devoid of spiritual power, these are Satan's instruments for leading people astray from God. The uncleanness may not be utter sensuality. Satan may work equally well through a refined selfishness, a life that rests on its own righteousness and denies the saving power of Christ (Rom. 10 : 3). In the New Testament we read much of unclean spirits, demoniacal beings at work from Satau and for Satan, torturing men (Mark 1 : 23; 3 : 11). **Frogs.** In the Egyptian plagues the frogs went everywhere (Exod. 8 : 3). They were regarded as unclean, low, and loathsome. These agencies employed by Satan are unclean, because they speak against the spread of God's holiness in the world. The mouth from which the frogs issue is the symbol of persuasion, appeal, reason, enticement. Lying reasons will be given for the service of Satan and opposition to God. All three powers combine in their last attempt. Oratory and poetry, the fine arts and paintings, light, literature, and the drama, persecution and politics, governments and business, all may be employed by Satan for his work. The wonder-working power of science, the pride of learning, the spirit of lawlessness and anarchy, may unite to lift up the heart of man against God and his rule. It is worthy of notice that in Chicago in the last years of the nineteenth century, the name of God has been eliminated from the school books, so that the young minds may not be favorably impressed on the side of God in their formative years. There is needed but the development of this spirit to create the reality of that seen in vision by John. Satan begets infidelity; the beast puts man above God; the false prophet teaches delusions and deceptions in the place of the truth. Christ himself is the entire truth. This is the satanic trinity over against the divine trinity of Father, Son, Spirit.

**14** false prophet. « For they are the spirits of devils,<sup>b</sup> 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.

14 frogs; for they are spirits of demons, working signs, which go forth upon the kings of the whole habitable earth, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God, the Almighty.

*g Ver. 13; 1 Kings 22 : 19-23.      h 13 : 13, 14; 19 : 20; 2 Thess. 2 : 9.  
i 19 : 19; 20 : 8; Isa. 31 : 1-8; Zeph. 1 : 14; Zech. 14 : 1-3.*

**14.** The acts of the evil spirits are announced. **Spirits . . . devils**, rather, *spirits of demons working signs*. As we see the contest in the world, it is men through whom Satan works. But back of the outward appearance and forces are evil influences, the direct outcome of evil agencies, *demons*. The New Testament speaks elsewhere of signs wrought by evil agencies in behalf of falsehood: "All power and signs and lying wonders with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2 : 9). They are not real divine signs, but lying wonders; just as spiritualism is, in its claims, a mocking imitation of Jesus' revelations from the unseen world. Their mission is to **go forth . . . world**, rather, *to go forth unto the kings of the whole world*. Their mission is like that of the lying spirits in 1 Kings 22 : 19-22. Power is lent them from the satanic world, that they may win the hearts of men, blinding and deluding them. These bad agencies get hold of the ruling forces, and enlist them on the side of evil. They will not all openly avow themselves the allies of Satan, but under deceptive guises they will work effectively for him. Under the plea of liberty there will be the claimed license for evil; the Lord's Day is changed into a holiday, ignoring its spiritual claims; purity is derided by stigmatizing it as narrow-mindedness. A materialistic philosophy denying the existence of the soul, the future life, the claims of an eternal morality will be a strong ally of Satan. The purpose of the assembling is **to . . . Almighty**, rather, *unto the war of the great day of God the almighty*. So the Standard Revised version. (Comp. 20 : 8.) It is not a **battle**, as though there were but a single contest, but a war, a long-continued struggle, a long contest between the forces of good and evil. This contest may continue for centuries. It has been a prevalent misconception

that the reference is to a single decisive battle, as it were. The proper reading gives us, on the one side, all false views of life, all satanic agencies, false religions, persecutions, and on the other side Jesus Christ, with all his multiplied agencies at work against them. In this contest, however long it may continue, however unequal may seem the struggle at times, the only issue can be that of an utter victory for the Lamb, the Son of God. **Kings**. This term stands for the leadership of the forces against Christ, the organized opposition. **Whole world**. This shows the world-wide character of the conflict. It is not limited to a definite locality or country. In all parts of the world there will be an outbreak of sin, men making war upon God's cause, upon the church, the holy ordinances, the Bible, the Lord's Day, the supremacy of Christ, the spirituality of Christ's religion. **That great day** is another designation for the last period of the world's history, approaching the day of final judgment. It is a time when God will so overwhelm wrong-doers, and will so manifest his own power, that the period will be known as his day. In like manner that time when Satan seemed to have the supremacy in the affairs of men, when Jesus was under the power of death, was called "your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22 : 53). Often-times, now, the age seems to be under the power of Satan; but, in that period, it will be seen by all to be the great day of the almighty God. For this day all other days were made.

**15.** This verse is parenthetical, introduced as a word of counsel and appeal to the saints. It is in reality the voice of Jesus Christ, the leader and shepherd of his people, though spoken by John. The coming referred to is the second final personal appearance of the Lord Jesus. Many preparatory comings have been noticed, but all

15 \*Behold, I come as a thief. <sup>1</sup>Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 <sup>m</sup>And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue <sup>n</sup>Armageddon.

*k* 3 : 3, 4.

*l* Luke 12 : 39, 40.

*n* Judg. 5 : 19; 2 Kings 23 : 29, 30; Zech. 12 : 11.

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Happy is he that watches, and keeps his garments, that he may not walk naked and they see his shame.

16 And they gathered them into the place which is called in Hebrew, Har-Magedon.

*m* 19 : 19; Ezek. 39 : 17; Joel 3 : 9-14.

were anticipatory and preparatory to this. **Thief.** This term suggests suddenness on his part and unpreparedness on their part. To the ungodly, confident of victory, "the coming will be as sudden and unexpected as it will be unwelcome." To the Christian also, in this day, when the forces of evil are so outspoken and defiant, there might naturally be a faint-heartedness as to his coming. He may come soon; his coming will be at any time, unexpected (Matt. 24 : 48; 2 Peter 3 : 10). **Shame.** The figure is that of a man with his clothing on, so that if the thief should come the man will be girded for meeting him, prepared for his coming. The Christian must always be clothed upon with the garments of pardon, the justified life, a daily sanctification that will issue in holiness in the life to come. Having put on Christ at conversion and in his baptism, he must walk after Christ (Gal. 3 : 27). The *shame* does not mean an utter loss of the soul, but denotes a certain loss of standing. Having heard the voice of the Captain of their salvation (Heb. 2 : 10), the hearts of the saints must be full of confidence and peace. Above the din of the conflict, the raging of the sea of human passions and hatreds, is the voice of Jesus, "Peace, be still." There arises the assurance of ultimate, certain, abiding triumph.

**16. He gathered them,** rather, *they gather them*. The reference is to three unclean spirits at work in the hearts of men. They meet at **Armageddon**, rather, *Har-Magedon*. The place of the conflict is mentioned, but the description of the contest does not occur until 19 : 19-21. This is in accord with the structure of the book; it is needful to know the entire book in order to understand definite parts. We are told that it is in the **Hebrew tongue** that it is called by this name. We are invited, therefore, to think either of the meaning of the word it-

self, its etymological meaning, or its association with the events of Hebrew history. *Har* means mountain; *Magedon* is that extensive plain in the central part of Palestine, the plain of Esraelon. Here took place that decisive conflict between the Canaanites on the one hand, and the Israelites under Deborah and Barak on the other. The victory here gave rise to the triumphant song of Deborah (Judg. 5 : 19). Here the enemies of God's people were completely routed. It was to them a synonym of triumph, the discomfiture of their foes. Its remembrance was to them an inspiration in the dark hours of their national life. Here also, in later years, the people of Israel were overcome in a conflict with the Egyptians, when Josiah, their pious leader, was slain (2 Kings 23 : 29). This defeat is spoken of in the lamentation given in 2 Chron. 35 : 25. The prophet Zechariah also alludes to it in his prophecy (12 : 9). The reference here cannot be to this disastrous conflict when Josiah fell, for this meant disaster. The reference must be to the first struggle mentioned, when the national life was preserved and the nation's enemies were utterly defeated. To the Hebrew mind Megiddo, in the days of Deborah, was the symbol of victory. It is so used in this place. The three unclean spirits gather their forces together in a spiritual plain of Megiddo. Through their deceptive words the assembled kings confidently hope for a triumph. But, in God's purpose, it is to be to them what it was in the olden days of their history. John, in his early Galilean life, lived in sight of the plain and the mountains of Megiddo. From his home he could see the sun resting on these mountain-tops. In the vision he sees these same mountain-tops. He recognizes them as the familiar sights of his Galilean life. It is to this definite place the enemies of God are led and the conflict is joined. **Into a place called,**

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came <sup>a</sup> great voice out of the temple of

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl on the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from

*o Isa. 66:6.*

rather, *into the place which is called*. John seeing the mountain in vision, knowing who God is in his great power, remembering the incidents of Hebrew history, sees that the issue must of necessity be a signal victory for the Lamb. In the fulfilment of the history no definite place in Palestine, or elsewhere, is thought of. Everything is used in its symbolic sense. The term Euphrates does not mean the river of that name. If the river of that name had entirely disappeared in the days of John, or if it were to disappear in our days, the prophecy would lose none of its force. It is used in its symbolic meaning, that of the barrier that separated the Israelitish people from the countless numbers and irresistible might of the heathen peoples living on the other side. Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah judges." When the prophet Joel mentions that the nations will be gathered together in the valley of Jehoshaphat, it is not meant that they will be literally assembled here (3:2). It has the broader meaning that Jehovah will gather the nations together and judge them. The literal meaning disappears in the larger and symbolic meaning. In like manner here the term Har-Magedon means that in the final and long-continued conflict between the powers of the Lamb and of Satan, the issue must be favorable to the cause of Christ. In this figurative way it is announced that another song, like that of Deborah, may be sung when the conflict is over. We have in our language a phrase of similar import, "It will be a Waterloo for them," meaning thereby that an overwhelming defeat will be theirs. Har-Magedon means a spiritual Waterloo for Satan. Similarly Swete: "Megiddo fitly symbolizes the world-wide distress of the nations at the overthrow of their kings in the final war."

#### 17-21. THE SEVENTH BOWL.

17. **The seventh angel.** Omit **angel.** This bowl is emptied, not upon any definite object, as in the six

preceding bowls, but **into the air**, rather, *upon*. Some take this term as a metaphorical description of the kingdom of Satan, inasmuch as Satan is called the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). If this were so, the meaning would not vary much from the teaching of the fifth bowl, which was emptied upon the seat of the beast (ver. 10). The term *air* is made use of, not because of any supposed connection between the air and evil spirits, but with reference to the air as that region on which the earth immediately depends for life, the region from which descends, in ordinary times, the most blessed and genial influences, but from which, when things are disarranged, come the most severe disturbances, fraught with ills of all kinds, dangers, and death. As God has already touched with his blighting power the earth, in its land and sea and springs, and the sun above, there remains only one element essential to life and happiness that is untouched, the air about them. The sea has become a festering mass of blood, the sun burns them, the springs are blood, now the air they breathe is touched, and becomes a curse to them. Everything about them becomes their enemy, just as if the all-embracing air were changed into a source of ill to them. They lean on earth and sun and air for their very life, and they all, in turn, like serpents, sting them. It is a striking and fearful picture of the encompassing elements of every kind turning against them. Everything that makes up life, friendship, social ties, business relations, political associations, all become hurtful to them. Straightway **came a great voice out of . . . throne**, rather, *out of the temple, from the throne*. The voice is that of God speaking. It is the **great voice** of God; it is from the **temple** where God dwells; it is from the **throne** on which God sits. It was God who, at the beginning (ver. 1), gave the command to the seven angels. Fittingly now he speaks when they have done his work. The utterance is,

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.

p 21 : 6; Ezek. 39 : 8; Dan. 12 : 7-13.

q 8 : 5; 11 : 19.

r 11 : 13; Isa. 29 : 6.

s Dan. 12 : 1.

**18** the throne, saying, It is done. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men on the earth, so mighty an

**It is done.** This does not mean merely that the seven angels have accomplished what was put upon them; that would assuredly be unworthy the announcement by God himself. Rather it means, the consummation of all things has now come, the end has been reached, the fulness of God's wrath has been poured out. It is the distinct announcement that the warfare and plans of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, have come to an end, final and irreversible. It is the finishing of the mystery of God spoken of in 10 : 7. When Jesus came to the close of his life, he said, "It is finished," meaning not simply that his life was ended, but that his work of expiation, his plans involving the reconciliation of the human race, his complete manifestation of God, these were now finished. In like manner the judgments of God upon the ungodly world have now come to a close.

**18.** The effects of the plague on the air are now seen. Through the disturbances in the air come naturally thunderings, storms, cyclones, destruction. Instead of being balmy and life-giving, the air has become a source of alarm and peril to men. **Voices . . . lightnings,** rather, *lightnings, and voices, and thunders.* Toward the conclusion of the series of the seals there was an earthquake, and nature had great convulsions (6 : 12-15). Toward the conclusion of the series of the trumpets also was an earthquake (11 : 13). Here for a third time, in the series of the bowls, are great convulsions in nature, symbols and prophecies of great convulsions in the real world where man lives, the intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual worlds. That these visions may receive a real fulfilment it is not needful to think that there will be any actual convulsions in the material world. Everything is seen in vision, is a picture of some real thing that shall come to pass. Through

the thunders and heavings of the stable earth, the shaking of things seemingly immovable, John sees that great destructions and convulsions will take place, affecting man on every side. Great systems of unbelief will crumble and fall; great falsehoods will be seen to be untrue; great delusions will lose their hold on men; great agencies for wickedness will give way before God's spiritual revelations of himself. In 11 : 19, when the seventh trumpet sounded, there were like destructive forces in nature and an earthquake. But as is seen in this entire series, when contrasted with the series of the trumpets, the effects here are more serious and complete in their results. Emphasis is laid upon the earthquake. **Great earthquake . . . great,** rather, *great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty.* In 11 : 13, at the resurrection of the witnesses, before the seventh trumpet sounded, an earthquake shook the city and one-tenth fell, and many were brought to repentance. Here, at a later period, the entire city, representing the organized opposition to God, falls. There have been many convulsions in the history of the race, when the forces organized against Christ have met with disasters. The wide circulation of the Scriptures, the Reformation, the growth of the missionary enterprise, the enlarged desires for the training of the young, all these might be fittingly portrayed as earthquakes whereby Satan's kingdom was weakened. The future has in store yet mightier movements for righteousness, and mightier judgments for wickedness. It has been noted that this scene of judgment is described in a sevenfold way, thereby indicating its completeness and finality. We have (1) the lightnings and voices and thunders; (2) a great earthquake; (3) the great city destroyed; (4) the cities of

19 And <sup>t</sup>the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and <sup>u</sup>great Babylon <sup>v</sup>came in remembrance before God, <sup>w</sup>to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And <sup>x</sup>every island fled away, and

19 earthquake, so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and mountains

<sup>t</sup> 14 : 8.

<sup>u</sup> 17 : 5.

<sup>x</sup> 18 : 5.

<sup>y</sup> 14 : 10; Isa. 51 : 17-23; Jer. 25 : 15, 16; 51 : 6, etc.

<sup>z</sup> 6 : 14; Isa. 2 : 14-17.

the nations fall; (5) Babylon the great is remembered; (6) every island flees away; (7) a great hailstorm. Everything tends to heighten the sublimity of the last scenes of judgment.

**19. The great city** is the symbol of the organized and concentrated opposition to God. The city, as opposed to the country, is the center of a highly complex organized society, fertile in resources and power, where both goodness and badness reach a full development. Cities have always been the centers of the world's civilization and power; men flocked to them. The great cities dominated the great world empires. Rome was, in reality, the Roman Empire. Nineveh and Babylon summed up in themselves the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. In this verse and in the following chapters the city appears as Babylon. The overthrow, here mentioned, is given in detail in these chapters. In the Old Testament Jerusalem is the symbol of God's kingdom, "the city beautiful for situation." Mount Zion stands for the heavenly life. To enter into the hill of the Lord is a symbol of entrance into the after blessed life (Ps. 15 : 1). The position occupied by Babylon, in history, as a great opposing force, making war upon the chosen people, crushing them and taking them into captivity, this, in the corresponding spiritual sphere, is occupied by the organized wickedness of the Christian era. *The great city* stands here as the synonym of whatever is opposed to God—wickedness, disbelief, unbelief, sensuality, apostasy, embracing all who are, in reality, hostile to Christ. **Three parts.** This does not mean that one-third of the city fell, but that it was broken up into parts, disorganized, and thrown into confusion, and thus more effectually destroyed. The entire city, in all its three parts, falls. In this respect it differs from the judgment

in 11 : 13, where one-tenth of the city fell. **Cities of the nations.** As Babylon, regarded as the center of the world's heathenism and opposition to God, fell, so in like manner all the forces and powers in subordination to it and in affiliation with it, fell. Just as in actual war the fall of a capital city, like Babylon, involves the fall of all the allied places in the empire, so here the fall of the central stronghold of the opposition to God involves the fall of every affiliated agency. In this way it is set forth, under the figure of a military campaign, that the organized kingdom of Satan in the world will be utterly overthrown from its center to its circumference. There is a beastlike power in the world, having a throne (<sup>13 : 2</sup>), making war on the saints (<sup>13 : 7</sup>); this beast, this Babylon is to be overthrown. **And great . . . God,** rather, and *Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God.* This expression sums up the preceding statement. The great city, Babylon, comes before God, to make use of a human expression, for a visitation of judgment. For a time, even for centuries, it seems that God has no holy remembrance; there comes a time, as here, when God's holy nature asserts itself. This passage is also an anticipatory statement of what will fill up chapters XVII and XVIII. The *cup* has been already introduced in 14 : 10; the wrath of God is severe, as shown by the term **fierceness**.

**20. The figure** is now changed from that of a fierce armed contest to that of convulsions in nature. **Every island . . . found.** As in the sixth seal (<sup>6 : 14</sup>), everything in nature seems to be rushing to destruction. The fixed landmarks, islands and mountains disappear. If islands were actually swallowed up by the ocean, if mountain ranges were to disappear, we would naturally think that nature

21 the mountains were not found. <sup>a</sup> And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone about the weight of a talent:* and <sup>b</sup> men blasphemed God because of <sup>c</sup>the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

*a* 8 : 7; 11 : 19; Josh. 10 : 11.

21 were not found. And great hail, as of a talent's weight, comes down out of heaven on men; and men blasphemed God on account of the plague of the hail; because its plague is exceeding great.

*b* Ver. 9, 11.

*c* Exod. 9 : 23-25.

was giving way and a universal ruin was impending. Convulsions in the business, political, social, and moral worlds, under God's direction, would in like manner compel the thought that a new era was impending, the old systems giving way under the power of God's judgments. It does not at all follow that when God's severest judgments come, and organized wickedness breaks down, that any physical changes such as are here described will take place. We are dwelling in this book in the domain, not of the physical world and material forces, but in the spiritual world. The forces that are meant are the spiritual agencies under God's control and guidance.

**21. And . . . talent,** rather, *And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men.* From the air, touched with the plague (ver. 17), comes this great storm of hail. In the Old Testament, hail is frequently the symbol of severe afflictions, calamities, misfortunes. We find allusions to hail in Isa. 30 : 30; Ezek. 13 : 11. "Thus a great hail became the symbol of divine wrath against the foes of Israel (comp. Isa. 28 : 2; Ezek. 38 : 22)" (SWETE). An ancient writer, Diodorus Siculus, speaks of hailstones being incredibly great that were only one-sixtieth the size of a talent. A talent weighs about fifty pounds. Josephus speaks of stones thrown by the Roman catapults weighing a talent, very destructive in their effects. The figure here is of the strongest kind, hailstones of such a nature as would destroy all vegetation, trees, the material civilization, life itself. Everything is on a vast scale; what God does, whether in mercy or punishment, is done in a godlike way. God, at times, has helped his cause by storms, nature thus helping the supernatural (Josh. 10 : 1-10). In time to come there will be great convulsions in nature, spoken of by Jesus (Matt. 24 : 29).

Those not struck by the hail, did not repent, but **blasphemed God.** Repentance, instant and complete, ought to have been theirs; but, as revealing the utter hardness of heart, they reproach God. Nothing can show more plainly the utter and fixed hardness of the heart than this; punishment only hardens the heart the more. The hail fell upon *men*, a term used here in a bad sense, meaning persons whose portion is in this life, men of an earthly nature. Milton describes Satan and the spirits of the lost as growing more hard and bitter in heart, surrounded by the fires of hell. This is not poetry or exaggeration, but is in accord with the Scripture teachings and with human experience. For an unlike scene, see 11 : 13. When hail came upon the land of Egypt, God drew a dividing line between his friends and his foes so that no hail fell upon the Israelites (Exod. 9 : 26). God knows how to keep his own, both in this life and in the next.

**NOTE 1. THE MEANING OF HARMAGEDON.** Many fanciful notions have been entertained concerning the conflict that takes place at Har-Mageddon. It has been conjectured by many that this vision predicts and portends an actual armed conflict in days to come, at some definite locality. Many have connected this conflict in some way with Mohammedanism, inasmuch as the historical place mentioned is in the domain of the Turkish Empire. Others have located the scene of this conflict in our own country, and in some definite part of it. But all thoughts of an armed conflict must be utterly dismissed from the mind, either in the plain of Esdraelon or elsewhere.

Megiddo or Magedon was situated six miles from Carmel, at the southwestern edge of the great central plain of Palestine, the present Leijun. Conder places it at the present Mejedda, ten

miles from Jenin. This plain has been one of the great battlefields of the world; here empires rose and fell. Stanley calls it the great battlefield of Palestine. Here armies from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to Napoleon met each other in conflict. Near this plain also was the larger part of our Lord's earthly ministry. Here on this plain took place four critical events in Hebrew history. Here took place the great victory of Barak over the Canaanites (*Judg.* 4, 5); the victory of Gideon over the Midianites (*Judg.* 7). Here also came two great disasters—the death of Saul (*1 Sam.* 31 : 8), and the death of Josiah (*2 Kings* 23 : 29). As nations long keep in memory the places associated with critical periods of the national life, Megiddo became interwoven with the successes of Barak and Gideon. When John sees in vision the well-known features of Megiddo with the associated mountain, notices the assembling groups of hostile kings gathered from all quarters, gathered to assail and overcome the Redeemer and his cause, he instinctively associates with the scene the impending victory. Here at Megiddo will appear a divine Barak, a divine Gideon. An entirely new and enlarged conception is given to this vision and its teachings by the displacing of the term battle by the term war. It is not a definite, short, decisive action that is here spoken of, but a long-continued struggle, denominated a war. On the one side are the three allied forces of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet. They are summoned by the three unclean spirits that proceed out of the mouths of the three great foes. These foes are not material and physical, but moral, intellectual, spiritual; they proceed out of the mouth. Here gathered together are all kinds of wickedness, uncleanness, sensuality; the forces of the great world powers with their attractiveness and persecution, worldliness, unbelief, disbelief; learning with its false philosophies, outward forms of religion, ritualism, claiming a magical power, new forms of deception—all these combine against the Redeemer and his cause. In the closing days of the nineteenth century assaults were made on the Christian system under the guise of science. Atheistic views

of evolution and materialism, a view of nature that admits of no supernaturalism, have blinded the minds of many. False systems of philosophy, pantheism, mingling God with nature, have led others astray.

This conflict is world-wide in its range. There is no place or age where Satan does not stir up enmity against the cause of Christ. This vision is, therefore, only a figurative way of declaring that Satan will make a supreme and world-wide effort to destroy the power of Christ, making use of all agencies. What we have yet seen of the virulence of his attacks, the deceptive agencies employed, may be as nothing to what will be revealed. The hearts of men sometimes fail them for fear; they put forth their hands to steady the ark. But with Jesus Christ is victory in the end. Nothing can withstand the truth and the power of Christ. He is life itself; he is the truth itself; he has all power in heaven and on earth. When the smoke and din of the conflict are over, it will be seen that Christ reigns supreme, and that his enemies are under his feet. In this book the familiar names of Babylon, Jerusalem, Euphrates, Sodom, Egypt, Megiddo are not used in their physical sense, but as standing for certain well-known moral conceptions. We misuse the teaching of the book to make it teach history or geography. This vision teaches (1) a world-wide conflict between the forces of Christ and Satan; (2) a contest in nature like that which took place at Megiddo in the Old Testament times; (3) a struggle growing in intensity as the ages go on; (4) a struggle that ends in a complete and final victory for Christ. It is, therefore, in correspondence with the New Testament teaching everywhere that there comes a time when He whose right it is to reign will reign in acknowledged supremacy.

<sup>17</sup>The fancy of Gunkel that the reference is not to Megiddo, but to an old myth, though accepted by Bousset and by Cheyne (*Enc. Bibl.*, l. c.) does not merit serious consideration" (SWETE).

NOTE 2. MEANING OF THE SEVEN BOWLS. The series of the bowls constitutes the last of the three great series that make up, with their accompanying

and supplementary visions, this entire book. In some respects they resemble the other series. This series has resemblances to the others: (1) in the number of the visions—seven. This indicates a completeness in the series; (2) in the division into two groups, a group of four and a second group of three. The dividing line is very marked in all three series; (3) the visions have a continuing effect. The first bowl does not exhaust all its effects before the second begins. In the sixth bowl the sores of a preceding bowl are noticeable. It is perhaps true in all the series that the results of each vision continue into the next, and perhaps through all the succeeding visions.

There are dissimilarities between this series and the preceding series. This is noticed (1) in the growing intensity of the plagues here mentioned in contrast with the penalties in the trumpets. In the trumpets only one-third of the sea, the waters, and the trees were touched. Here the entire sea and all the springs become blood. This entireness of the plague is brought out in a marked manner. (2) These are the last plagues. Others were initiatory, these are the last in order of time. They introduce the final stage. (3) The pouring out of the bowls takes place in the most speedy and continuous manner. There are no breaks in the procedure. It is as if God were now in haste to break down all opposition.

(4) No saving or regenerating character rests in these last plagues. The only effect is to aggravate the hardness and bitterness of the heart. In other parts of the book, at an earlier stage, sufferings at times brought thoughtfulness and repentance. (See 11:13.) In this series penaltics lead to blasphemy. (5) These plagues have in them many reminiscences of the ten plagues in Egypt. At that time Jehovah and Pharaoh were in conflict. Jehovah was bent on bringing out his people into a land of promise. At this period, God is about to break down the latter-day Pharaohs of every kind. Hence he makes use of his plagues to crush opposition. In this case, as in that, only hardness of heart resulted. The second and third plagues remind us of

the first plague in Egypt. The first plague here reminds us of the sixth plague in Egypt. The entire chapter is full of expressed and implied allusions to the Old Testament times.

Fittingly these plagues are contained, not in vials, but in broad, open bowls from which the contents may be emptied entire at once. The two following chapters belong, in reality, to this series, inasmuch as they are but the full explanation of the nature and destruction of Babylon mentioned in ver. 19. Nothing is more impossible than to interpret these plagues literally, or to attempt to find in the records of history the definite events to which they refer. If they are understood as giving general principles of the divine government they are exceedingly valuable and luminous with lessons of warning and guidance for the church.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. It is in great mercy that God restrains his wrath that men may repent. An instant and full punishment would mean a universal destruction. God's poured-out wrath means a judgment begun. The emptied bowl of God's wrath means an utter destruction and hopelessness (ver. 1).

2. The angels obey at once. Promptness in service is a secret of the angelic service. We pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven. The prayer answered means whole-heartedness, gladness, and unhesitating service (ver. 2).

3. The mark of the beast, at times, brings outward prosperity and enjoyment. The wicked often prosper in worldly affairs (Ps. 73:1-6). But God will, in the end, make a dividing line between the pious and the ungodly. Wickedness will be seen to be ungodliness and loathsomeness (ver. 2).

4. Even the men punished will acknowledge God's justice. The eyes of all will be opened so that they see their own character as in God's sight, and will confess his goodness and righteousness (ver. 5).

5. There will be a congruity between a man's character and his surroundings in the after existence. The basis of judg-

ment is worthiness, not caprice or mere power on God's part (ver. 6).

6. Sometimes God delays and men misunderstand him (6 : 10). When God speaks and acts, in a final way, his truth and righteousness are manifest (ver. 7).

7. The sources of blessings may be turned into a curse. The avenues of enjoyment may become highways of sorrow. The memory that may minister highest pleasure, may be full of stings for the soul, the sense of lost opportunities, of blighted lives, of possibilities that cannot be realized (ver. 8).

8. Punishment and pain will not, in themselves, work out repentance. Punishment, if there is an ugly and impudent heart, will create additional bitterness against God. There is a tremendous power in the human will whereby God's goodness and God's punishments work out results contrary to the design of these agencies (ver. 9).

9. Evil is sometimes concentrated in men and in places. Men become the willing servants of Satan led captive by him (Acts 13 : 10). Places may be full of Satan's power (2 : 13). Hell is that place where God's loving-kindness is not found. Heaven is full of God's presence and glory (ver. 10, 11).

10. Moral uncleanness is the worst uncleanness. Every age will have its special form, defiling the heart and opposing God. Politics, learning, position in social life, business, may be set apart as consecrated or may be satanic (ver. 13).

11. Satan has many delusions at work in the world to deceive men. It requires wisdom to distinguish between the truth of God and Satan's lies. We must test every spirit by the Scriptures and by its attitude toward Christ (ver. 14; 1 John 4 : 1).

12. Because Christ will come in a sudden and unexpected way, every one should be found watching. The believer cannot be surprised, for he abides in Christ. The attitude of the Christian and the church must be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (ver. 15; 22 : 20).

13. How many soever there be of God's enemies, their cause cannot prosper. Organized wickedness must go down because God is God. He can make use of

the locust, the wind, and all agencies to work out his purpose. Sometimes God's saints are discouraged because they cannot see all God's assembled forces (ver. 16).

14. God's plans come to a completion. He leaves nothing unfinished, either of blessedness for his people or penalty for his obdurate enemies. His plans reach from the beginning to the end. Human history stretches through long periods, but there comes a time when another stage begins (ver. 17).

15. Sometimes events ripen slowly, and ages pass between a promise and a fulfilment. At other times moral movements go with great rapidity. Moral earthquakes can shatter bad institutions in a moment. It is right to pray that God will hasten the coming of his kingdom and the breaking down of wickedness (ver. 18).

16. God cannot forget anything, for memory is an essential part of God's nature. If God remembers unforgiven sin, this means a constant punishment. If God remembers a faithful life and deeds of righteousness, this means a blessed after life (ver. 19; Heb. 6 : 10).

17. When God rises up in judgment nothing can stand before him. Every sinful thing will flee from his presence of its own accord. Good people and good institutions have nothing to fear from God. To them he will say, "Come, ye blessed" (ver. 20).

18. God can surround his people as with a wall of fire, so that nothing can harm them. In this life he makes his sun shine on the just and the unjust. In the days of moral separation he will discriminate between the holy and the unholy (ver. 21).

**SECTION 8.** Chap. XVII-XIX : 10.  
**DESTRUCTION OF THE HARLOT AND BABYLON.** This section is explanatory of references in the preceding section. In the series of the bowls (14 : 8) an angel announced, "Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen." In 16 : 19 it was stated that God had called Babylon into remembrance, implying that it was now God's plan to punish her. In this section we have a full treatment

*The harlot sitting on the beast. Exposition of the vision.*

**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 show unto thee the

**17** AND there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, and spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I

*d 16:1; 21:9. e 16:19; 18:16-19; Isa. 50, 51.*

of Babylon itself. No passage in the Bible is more graphic than that of the destruction of this great city in chap. XVIII. Three figures come before us in this section, the beast, the unclean woman, Babylon.

This woman is a Babylon, a great and corrupt city, an oppressor of God's people, debauching nations by her idolatries and her commerce. In order that he may present the magnitude of the corrupt forces that wear the name of Christ in an unworthy way, their magnificence, their seeming impregnability, their power over many nations, their seductions, he changes from the figure of the woman burned in the fire to that of the destruction of a great city, the smoke of whose conflagration may be seen from afar. John presents the faithful church of Christ under three aspects, the figure of a woman dwelling apart (chap. XII), a bride adorned for her husband (chap. XIX), the holy city descending out of heaven from God (21:12). He presents also the unfaithful under three aspects. This element is represented as "the great city"; that is, an unholy Jerusalem (11:8). In 17:1 it is represented under the figure of a harlot. In chap. XVIII it is portrayed under the figure of a great and mighty Babylon that is arrayed against Jesus Christ. Against the unclean woman, against the mighty Babylon is the power of the gospel, the unseen Lamb that through many agencies makes war upon them and overcomes them (17:14). The section extends to the time of the closing of the age.

One topic only, that of the destruction of Babylon, mentioned in 14:8; 16:19, fills up this portion of the book. It is something vastly important in itself, and in relation to the general plan of the book, because it occupies so much space, and it amplifies so largely what has already been mentioned in a concise way. It is one of the most impressive portions of the

book, presenting, in a graphic way, the strong opposition to Christ, the means of its overthrow, the rejoicing on the part of the church at its downfall. This section forms a part of the series of the bowls because it is only the explanation of what is given in 16:19. From chap. XII onward there are presented first the dragon, an incarnation, as it were, of Satan; then the beast, the secular world power; then the false prophet, working for the beast. In the inverse order we have the judgments of God upon them, one by one. We have first the destruction of the combined beast and the false prophet, here represented in the main by the unclean woman. Then, finally, in chap. XX, we have the destruction of Satan himself.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**THE VISION OF BABYLON THE GREAT.** In this chapter we have two main thoughts. We have first the vision of Babylon under the form of a drunken harlot sitting on a beast, fearful in appearance, and controlling it. We have secondly, the explanation of the mystery of the beast and of the woman by the angel. We are left, therefore, not to a human guessing, but have a divine certitude.

**1-6. BABYLON IS PORTRAYED UNDER THE FIGURE OF A DRUNKEN HARLOT UPON A BEAST.**

**1. And . . . vials,** rather, *bowl*s. We are not informed which one of the seven angels spoke to John. It is probable that it was the seventh, inasmuch as it was this one that announced the fall of Babylon (16:19). The words **Come hither** do not indicate any change of place by John, but there is a change in the vision so that it was as if John had gone into a different locality. In ver. 3 it is said that he went "in spirit" into the wilderness. Who is meant by the woman will be discussed afterward in the ex-

judgment of <sup>f</sup>the great whore <sup>g</sup>that  
2 sitteth upon many waters; <sup>h</sup>with whom  
the kings of the earth have committed  
fornication, and <sup>i</sup>the inhabitants of  
the earth have been made drunk with  
the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit

will show thee the judgment of the  
great harlot, that sits on many waters;  
2 with whom the kings of the earth com-  
mitted fornication, and those who  
dwell in the earth were made drunken  
3 with the wine of her fornication. And  
he carried me away in the Spirit into a

*f* Ver. 4, 5; 19 : 2; Isa. 23 : 17; Nahum 3 : 4.

*g* Ver. 15; Jer. 51 : 13.

*h* 18 : 3.

*i* 14 : 8; 18 : 3; Jer. 51 : 7.

planations as well as in a note. **Judgment . . . whore**, rather, *harlot*. The term *harlot* is in complete contrast with the figure of the woman clothed in splendor in 12 : 1, and with the woman dressed in white, the Lamb's wife, in 19 : 7, 8. The harlot is afterward seen to be Babylon (ver. 5), but in a mystical, figurative sense. The term indicates moral uncleanness; a spiritual fornication involving idolatry. In three places the term is applied to heathen cities. The prevailing meaning of the term is that of alienation from the true God and his worship. (See Isa. 1 : 21; Jer. 2 : 20; Ezek. 16 : 15.)

**Waters.** This term is explained in ver. 15, as referring to peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues; that is, to the entire world indicated here by the use of this fourfold expression. The *sitting* indicates the authority and dominion possessed by her. The figure itself is taken from Jer. 51 : 13. In a figurative way this is the declaration that the woman exercises a world-wide power over the nations of the earth, not a civil domination, but a corrupt religious control. This Scripture figure involves the elements of hostility to God, and also portrays an extensive exercise of power over the nations of the earth.

2. This verse introduces two features of the woman, she is vile in character and also drunken. **Kings of the earth.** The woman, on her part, exhibits uncleanness of character, and seduces, by her attractions, the nations of the earth. The civil and political powers of the earth are represented as in alliance with, and under the control of, a false religious spirit. The term *fornication* must be used here as embracing what is false and pernicious in religion. There may be a real idolatry when there is no outward idol. The more spiritual an idolatry may be, the more specious and se-

ductive it will be over intelligent minds. The woman is the tempter, leading the nations into the support of a false worship. Exemplifications can be found everywhere of nations as such using their power for impurity in teaching and worship. For ages the truth of God, as found in the Scriptures, was completely suppressed, so far as the outward expression was concerned, by the political power standing in the defense of the error. Not only kings, but the **inhabitants of the earth**, rather, *they that dwell in the earth*, are **made drunk**, enticed by the harlot with her false teachings. This passage reveals a world-wide influence over the minds of the ungodly, so that they are turned from the truth. It is just as if they were made actually drunken, and then while drunken, seduced into wickedness. There is an intoxication, a delirium that comes from sin. In their wild earnestness the priests of Baal cut themselves (<sup>j</sup> Kings 18 : 28). Those who sin are beside themselves (Luke 15 : 17); the opening of the eyes of the soul is the beginning of the godly life (<sup>k</sup> Acts 26 : 18).

3. **He.** This refers to the angel. **In the spirit.** The Revised version renders *in the Spirit*, meaning thereby the Holy Spirit. We have had the same expression in 1 : 10, "I was in the Spirit," where the reference is undoubtedly to the Holy Spirit as that element under whose guidance the entire book is given. Here the thought is different. It is not meant that John sees this through the Holy Spirit, but that, without any actual physical change, in the domain of his spiritual nature, through his mental imagery he sees the following vision. The vision takes a new direction; he is transported, as it were, into a new locality. The term *spirit* is used in this sense in 21 : 10; the same thought is expressed in other terms in 2 Cor,

\*into the wilderness: and I saw <sup>1a</sup> a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of <sup>m</sup>names of blasphemy, <sup>n</sup>having seven heads and ten horns.

*k* 12 : 6, 14.

*l* Ver. 18; 12 : 3.

wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, names full of blasphemy, having seven heads and

*m* 13 : 1-6.

*n* Ver. 9, 12.

**12 : 2. Into the wilderness.** The Revised version translates *into a wilderness*, inasmuch as the article is omitted. It is an open question whether the article should not be inserted in the translation, as Alford maintains, on grammatical grounds. We had in 12 : 6 a reference to a wilderness into which the woman fled. If the reference is to that wilderness, it should be rendered with the article even if it were not expressed. The term *wilderness* reveals the judgment that is impending on Babylon. Instead of being a center of trade, of pomp, of glory, the center of the world's power, the city with a crown on its head, it is portrayed as a wilderness, a place deserted and lonely. The fate that has come on the Old Testament Babylon whereby it is now only a heap of ruins, its magnificence changed into unsightly mounds, is that same fate that will come on its New Testament namesake, the cause that uplifts itself against Jesus. By a prophetic foresight John sees the coming desolation, and in this manner indicates it in vision. He sees in his vision a woman, a beast, a wilderness. Each word is a prophecy. The woman is fully described in the following verse. The beast is here described as to its color, **a scarlet color**; as to its character, **full of names of blasphemy**; as to its appearance, **having seven heads and ten horns**; as to its nature, **a beast**. As to this beast the question arises whether this is the same beast as that described in 13 : 1, 2. That it is the same beast is evident from the following considerations: (1) It has the same number of heads and horns. The general impression on the mind is that of sameness. (2) Here, as there, the beast has upon it the name of blasphemy. This name is expressed in the one case upon the heads; in the other upon the entire body. The beast, by its revealed and open character, is antagonistic to God. Every one looking upon it sees the term blasphemy. (3) The same attitude is exhibited in 13 : 17; 19 :

19, that of hostility to the Lamb and his cause. It makes war upon him that sits on the horse; that is, the Redeemer. (Comp. 17 : 14 with 19 : 20.) (4) The beast in 13 : 11 has a close fellowship with the second beast, lamblike in appearance and working miracles, called also the false prophet, and joined with this beast in destruction in chap. XIX. It may be regarded as settled that this beast is the one that appears in 13 : 1, 2. There are differences in description between the two, but not affecting their identity. (1) In 13 : 1 the beast has ten horns and seven heads; here the order is reversed, the beast having seven heads and ten horns. In 13 : 1 the attention is called first naturally to the ten horns, because they emerge first from the sea. When seen in open vision, the beast standing before us, not in its origin, but in its completeness, the first sight naturally is of the heads. Admitting their sameness, the difference as to the point of view is easily explained. (2) In 13 : 1 the heads bear the name of blasphemy; here the entire body is covered with names of blasphemy. In this is no conflict. It is not declared, in the first vision, that the body is not covered with blasphemous titles, but only that the heads, when first seen, were thus covered. It might also be that in the development of the beast, in subsequent ages, the hostility and blasphemous nature might be more fully developed and revealed. In this case the two visions would exhibit the beast in different stages of its work. (3) The composite character of the beast is expressed in 13 : 2, but not here. But the omission here of the composite nature does not involve the assertion of their unlikeness; it may be composite, though not definitely expressed. (4) The color of the beast in chap. XIII is not stated, though the dragon conferring on the beast his own power is fiery red in color (12 : 3). We might, therefore, infer that the beast in chap. XIII would have this color. The color of this beast is scarlet, akin to the red, having the color of the

**4** And the woman <sup>o</sup> was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, <sup>p</sup> and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, <sup>q</sup> having a golden cup in her hand <sup>r</sup> full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: <sup>s</sup> and upon her forehead *was a name written*,

**4** ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup, full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication, and on her forehead a

*o* 18 : 12, 16.

*p* Dan. 11 : 38.

*q* 18 : 6; Jer. 51 : 7.

*r* 14 : 8; Isa. 47 ; 57 : 3-10.

*s* Isa. 3 : 9; Jer. 3 : 3.

blood shed by the woman and the beast jointly. Scarlet was the color of the imperial power of Rome. Without affirming that the beast represents Rome, in any form, it may be suggested to John, inasmuch as everywhere in the world Rome was the world's great and governing power, that this beast has an imperial power akin to that of Rome. It is dressed in its imperial scarlet, having its wide sway. It is full of names of blasphemy; the body is covered with them, signifying that its entire nature is irreligious. It is full of the assumption of the divine prerogative; it claims an alliance with God in its nature, acts, and power. The term blasphemy involves a claim to act in the divine name. The Cæsars of Rome were regarded as divine beings. Men like Caligula and Nero, monsters in iniquity, were deified by the State religion. In English history men of unclean lives, like James II and Henry VIII, were called defenders of the faith. The beast, with its seven heads and ten horns, the terms seven and ten indicating a completeness in conception and power, stands as the representative of the worldly power in any and every age. It embraces Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Rome, and powers yet unborn when John wrote. It is a figure of all worldly powers by whatever name called, wherever situated. This subject will be further discussed in the after verses. The angel acts as an expositor in ver. 7-12.

**4.** Following the description of the beast we have the description of the woman. The woman *sits* upon the beast. In ver. 7 the beast carries the woman. The thought here is that the woman occupies her place on the beast as a throne. She controls it and makes use of it to carry out her will. **Purple and scarlet.** In the most gorgeous robes, attractive, significant of Oriental luxury and of imperial position, she

sits on her throne. It is held by some that the reference is direct to the papal church, with its cardinals and popes clothed in purple and scarlet. Without any doubt the church of Rome has often exhibited the character of this woman clothed in scarlet, but we must not limit the large and universal teaching here to that definite object. All that is meant here is that she is clothed in the highly colored robes of an unclean woman. The impure woman of to-day decks herself in gaudy, attractive attire; in like manner this figuratively unclean woman of the vision. She makes claim to occupy a high position, she asserts her wealth and social standing. There is the claim to sovereignty. This woman is utterly unlike the woman, the bride of Christ, clothed in the simplicity and purity of white (19 : 8). As a rule the vile woman, seeking to allure others from the life of purity, will be clothed in a deceitful splendor. Peter counsels the Christian woman to be modest in attire, to be decked with moral beauty rather than with jewels (1 Peter 3 : 3, 4). She has in her hand a **golden cup** . . . **fornication**. She seduces with her enticements, presented in a most attractive way, in a *golden cup*. Within it is full of that which morally intoxicates, leading astray from God. Outwardly beautiful, the woman and her teachings are **filthiness** in God's sight. The enticement is to idolatry, to false conceptions of religion, to the vices that naturally follow wrong conceptions of life.

**5.** The inner nature of the woman, the essence of her being, is brought out in this verse. **Forehead, name written.** Seneca and Juvenal, Roman writers of the first century, declare that it was the custom of the harlot to mark upon the forehead the manner of her life. The saints of God are marked with the seal of God (7 : 8; 14 : 1). The

<sup>t</sup>Mystery, <sup>u</sup>BABYLON THE GREAT, <sup>v</sup>the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

6 And I saw <sup>w</sup>the woman drunken <sup>x</sup>with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of <sup>y</sup>the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, <sup>z</sup>I wondered with great admiration.

<sup>t</sup> 2 Thess. 2 : 7.

<sup>u</sup> 14 : 8.

<sup>x</sup> 18 : 9; 19 : 2; Nahum 3 : 4.

<sup>y</sup> 18 : 24.

<sup>z</sup> 13 : 15; 16 : 6; Ps. 79 : 2, 3.

name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE 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 I wondered when I saw her, with great

worshiper of the beast had a mark upon the forehead (13 : 1, 6; 19 : 20). In neither case was there any actual mark as though it were a physical marking. It is a figurative way of saying that the inner character and the outward life correspond, that God knows who are his, that Satan has his recognized followers. The high priest had upon the forehead a plate with the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord" (Exod. 28 : 36). In vision John sees the woman, upon the forehead stands an inscription, **Mystery . . . earth**. It is a question whether the term *mystery* is to be taken as a part of the name, as Alford maintains, or that it is to be understood as the key to the interpretation of the words following; that they are to be taken in a figurative sense, not in a plain, literal way. The latter supposition is the more probable. It is scarcely probable that the name itself would be declared, in this open way, to be unreal. The term *mystery* has the same meaning as "spiritually" in 11 : 8. Some would limit the words upon the forehead to **Babylon the Great**, regarding the other words as explanatory of that term, and as God's interpretation of what the woman really is. We have this shorter form used in 14 : 8; 16 : 19. The term *mystery* occurs four times in this book, three of which refer to Babylon (10 : 7; 17 : 5, 7); one refers to the seven churches (1 : 20). The woman is called *Babylon the Great*, because she occupies the same position in the world that Babylon, as a city, occupied in its day in relation to God and his cause. A city like Babylon was in reality the entire empire; its customs, luxuries, idolatries, sensualities, were copied everywhere. Resembling her is this woman, the **mother of harlots**. Not simply is she a harlot, but she is a bearer of harlots and of moral **abomina-**

**tions.** She occupies a commanding first place in the world of uncleanness, and leads others astray. Her own claims are that she is a religious teacher; but utterly apart from this is God's revealed opinion stamped on the forehead, that she is vile in character, rejoicing in iniquity, and causing others to sin.

6. Her attitude toward the church is here exhibited. It is as if she had killed the witnesses of Jesus, and in her fury had drunk the blood; or it may refer to the fury kindled in her, the sight of the blood leading to a frenzy of heart, and causing additional bloodshed. **Saints.** This term expresses the holiness of the people killed. Because they were *saints* they became *martyrs*; that is, witnesses for Jesus, who counted not their lives dear unto them. Both terms represent the same persons in different relations. The killed belong to the church of Christ. **Wondered . . . admiration**, rather, *wonder*. John is full of amazement. What causes the wonder? Several motives doubtless co-operate. It would be a matter of surprise to see the alliance of a woman with a beast, and the beast under her control. That a beast should kill and destroy would be natural, but that the woman should have a beastlike nature would, at the first sight, seem unnatural. It would be a matter of surprise to see in the wilderness a woman engaged in this work. Before this, in vision, he had seen a woman in the wilderness (12 : 6) representing God's cause on the earth, and under God's protection while there. Does the woman in this wilderness bear any relation to the first woman seen in the wilderness? Has the church of Christ become a seemingly corrupt thing? Is there an organization calling itself Christian, bearing this hal-lowed name, that is in reality against

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 <sup>a</sup>The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and <sup>b</sup>shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and <sup>c</sup>go into perdition:

7 wonder. And the angel said to me, Why didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition; and

<sup>c</sup> 13 : 1-11.

<sup>d</sup> 11 : 7.

<sup>e</sup> Ver. 11; 13 : 10; 18; Dan. 7 : 11; 11 : 36, 45; 2 Thess. 2 : 3-8.

Jesus, killing his servants? In 12 : 6 the woman stands for Christ's cause on the earth; here the woman stands for the bitter foe of Christ's cause. The angel notes the perplexity in his face. It ought to be a matter of surprise to men and angels that any one should be against God, openly or secretly; that any one should oppose the work of Jesus and kill the servants of Jesus. All sin is a surprising thing as well as an abominable thing. "Who was this woman? What was the meaning of the beast? The seer had lost his clue; he was bewildered by a vision so widely different from that for which he looked. An interpreter is needed, and he is at hand in the person of the angel who had undertaken to act as guide (see ver. 7)" (SWETE).

**7-18. EXPLANATION BY THE ANGEL OF THE MYSTERY OF THE BEAST AND OF THE WOMAN.** We have the explanation resolving itself into two parts: first, the explanation of the mystery of the beast (ver. 7-14); secondly, of the woman (ver. 15-18).

7. Both as to the present and as to the future the human mind unaided cannot fathom the hidden mysteries. The angel throws light upon both. The explanation stands alone in the book for fulness. From this we may infer the difficulty of the teachings and the importance of understanding them. The two figures, the woman and the beast, represent the combined forces in opposition to Christ, continuing through the centuries until the close of the age. We have had, heretofore, Satan and the two beasts doing his will. In the main, the woman takes the place largely of the second beast, inasmuch as it would be impossible to combine both working together, except through one controlling mind, here represented by the woman. We have largely the same ground covered as in chap. XIII, except that

here we have revealed the fate that befalls them, their utter destruction. In ver. 3 the woman sits upon the beast; here the beast carries the woman, both conveying the idea of the beast doing the woman's will. The term **mystery**, in the uniform usage of the Scriptures, denotes something lying beyond the power of the merely natural apprehension, and is revealed only to such as have the mind of the Spirit. (Comp. Rom. 16 : 25; 1 Cor. 2 : 7-10; 1 Cor. 15 : 51; Eph. 3 : 3, 5.) John also, in this book, uses the term with the same meaning, implying that the real meaning is not that which lies on the surface. (Comp. 1 : 20; 10 : 7.) There would have been no mystery had the power referred to here been simply an openly ungodly power, and hence called Babylon. But there was a deep mystery if the power so designated professed to be the very opposite of that which it really was.

8. This verse has been the center of many conflicting interpretations. Four things are affirmed of the beast: *it was*, *it is not*; *it shall ascend . . . pit*, rather, *is about to come up out of the abyss*; *it shall go into perdition*. We have here the great world power in several of its manifestations, disappearing and then reappearing in a different shape. *Was*. From the first there was an organized enmity against God, breaking out into persecution, causing a great enmity toward Christ. *Is not*. In some sense the beast ceased to exercise its beast-like nature for a period of time. The similarity between this beast and that noticed in chap. XIII is worthy of consideration. In both cases there are seven heads and ten horns. In both cases all the world wonders after the beast (13 : 8; 17 : 8). In both cases, here and in 13 : 8, those alone do not worship the beast whose names are enrolled in the book of life. In 13 : 3

and they that dwell on the earth <sup>t</sup>shall wonder, <sup>s</sup>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 <sup>b</sup>here is the mind which hath wisdom; <sup>i</sup>The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sit-

they will wonder who dwell on the earth, whose name is not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was, and is not, and shall come. Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits.

f 13 : 3, 4.

g 13 : 8.

h 13 : 18; Dan. 12 : 10.

i 13 : 1.

one of the heads was slaughtered, here the entire body is regarded as non-existent. There came a time in the history of the beast when it became as though it was not. But the beast was not destroyed. The third stage in the history of the beast is, *it is about to come out of the abyss*. In 13 : 4 the expression, “the deadly wound was healed,” corresponds in meaning with the assertion here that it is about to ascend from the abyss, the recovering from the suspended hostility to Christ, the entering upon a new era of hostility to the kingdom of God. The beast will again resume his sway in the world with a fresh inspiration of the satanic spirit, more violent, more intolerant, than before. *Perdition*. This statement is not made concerning the beast in chap. XIII; now, at a later stage, it is seen that its end must be destruction. The world powers themselves cannot be punished in the future ages, but they can be destroyed here so far as their influence is concerned, and the persons controlling them can be judged before the bar of God. In 13 : 3 the world wonders after the beast as here, **they that dwell on the earth**, that is, the earthly minded people. The spiritually minded, **whose names . . . life**, rather, *whose name hath not been written in the book of life*. This book has in it the names of those really living, those whose lives are in fellowship with God. They are preserved from perdition because they have life in them. They see the real character of the beast and its rider, their minds are not seduced. (For the book of life see Luke 10 : 20; Phil. 4 : 3; Rev. 20 : 15.) **Foundation**. As in 13 : 8 there is a relation between the saved and the Saviour that antedates the creation of the world. The creation was made for the saved man, not the man for the creation. Redemption was no sudden

or transitory thought on the part of God, it lies deep down in his heart and plans. It is not possible that a plan so long-reaching and so wide-reaching can be broken in upon by the beast. **Was, and is not, and yet is**, rather, *Was, and is not, and shall come*.

**9. And . . . wisdom.** Omit *And*. Wisdom is required that we get hold of the teachings of the Spirit. Wisdom is required here that we rest not in literal fulfilment, but may fathom the mystery contained in the statement. In 13 : 9, 18 is a statement of the same kind. Divine wisdom is shown in the explanation. **Seven heads, seven mountains.** One figure gives way to another figure. The head is the prominent part of the body, the mountain stands forth conspicuous above the plain. According to Bible usage the seven mountains stand for seven kingdoms, for political power. Babylon, situated in a plain, is called a destroying mountain (*Jer. 51 : 25*). For similar illustrations see Ps. 68 : 16, 17; Isa. 40 : 4; Ezek. 35 : 2. In like manner Daniel speaks of a stone becoming a mountain; that is, Messiah’s kingdom growing to be a great power in the world (*Dan. 2 : 35*). These seven mountains are not to be literally understood as seven mountains, as though the seven hills of Rome were meant. The number seven itself is never used in this book in a strict mathematical sense, as though it stood for a real accurate seven; it stands here, as everywhere, a symbol of completeness, a perfect number. In 13 : 3 one head was slaughtered, but assuredly this does not mean that one literal mountain was destroyed. The seven mountains represent seven political powers; that is, in accordance with the symbols in the book, it stands for and represents the entire system of the great world powers arrayed against Christ. It is not impossible that John,

10 teth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, 11 he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seventh, <sup>k</sup> and goeth into perdition.

10 And they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he comes, he must 11 remain a little time. And the beast that was, and is not, he also is an eighth, and is of the seven, and goes

*k* Ver. 8; 19 : 20.

lying in the domain of the Roman empire, and inasmuch as Rome at that time was the embodiment of the world's great and almost supreme power, may have found in Rome an illustration of the beast.

**10. And there are seven kings,** rather, *and they are seven kings.* They refers to the mountains of the preceding verse; these mountains stand for kings. **Five are fallen.** The word *fallen* indicates a violent fall, as when a kingdom is overthrown. It is the term applied to Babylon itself (14:8). John wrote at a time when Rome was the controlling power of the world. It is indicated here in the vision, in a general way, that a large part of the antagonists of the kingdom of God have already appeared and been destroyed. In the time then present there was an organized opposition to Christ; this opposition to Christ would continue into the future. But whenever and wherever any peoples placed themselves in opposition to Christ, their downfall must come in time. A violent end will come to all peoples arrayed against Christ. All alike, in time, will meet their doom. **Continue a short space, a little while.** The emphasis rests on the shortness of the time. Compare ver. 12 for another indication of a short period. Centuries have passed since John wrote this. We must take this description of the short period of time as a shortness in the divine conception of things. Even one thousand years are but as yesterday. God's days have more than twenty-four hours in them. The expressions in this book, indicating an extreme shortness, must be construed in the light of experience as a short period as compared with eternal things, not as asserting an absolute shortness (1:1; 12:12). The length of the period may also be conditioned on the faithfulness of God's people. At times God's promises depend upon cer-

tain human conditions, so that men may restrain or hasten the fulfilment (2 Peter 3:12, R. V.).

**11.** This verse depicts the seven heads as destroyed, but the beast yet living. The eighth form is not represented as one of the heads transformed into an eighth, but as a principle or power that springs out of the seven, summing up, as it were, the principle and spirit of all. He is not spoken of as one of the seven, but as the successor and resultant of them all, springing out of them. The preposition of being here a term of origin, he springs out of them all. In the Greek the *he* is emphatic, alluding, in the view of many, to some one who will sum up in himself the spirit of the Antichrist. It is better to regard this as having allusion to the last and highest manifestation of the world's ungodly power in whatever shape it appears. Daniel speaks of a "little horn," with eyes like the eyes of a man, and speaking great things (Dan. 8:9-12). Paul speaks of a "son of perdition," to be destroyed by the coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:3-8). It is said of this eighth manifestation, not that he falls, but that he **goeth into perdition.** He is the final form of the destructive opposition to Christ. It comes after the seven; the complete organized forces arrayed against the Redeemer is numbered an eighth, and represents the ungodly power in its highest and ultimate manifestation. He does not conceive of the beast as living without heads, that would be a monstrosity. He is thinking only of the ideas involved, the principle of evil as existing after the chief forms of opposition have passed away. John brings before us the idealized conception contained in this figure; that is, the world power in the shape of a beast with seven heads. By these heads he represents, in a figurative way, the successive forms of this manifestation. As one by one the varying forms are destroyed, the beast

12 And <sup>t</sup> 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, <sup>m</sup> and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.  
 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, <sup>n</sup> and the Lamb shall overcome them: <sup>p</sup> for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: <sup>q</sup> and they that are

12 into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who received no kingdom as yet; but receive authority as kings one hour, 13 along with the beast. These have one mind, and they give their power and 14 authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them; because he is Lord of lords, and King of kings,

<sup>t</sup> 13 : 1; Zech. 1 : 18, 19, 21.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 17.

<sup>n</sup> 16 : 14; 19 : 19; Dan. 7 : 21, 25; 8 : 25; Acts 4 : 26.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. 2 : 9; 110 : 5, 6; 149 : 5-9; Dan. 2 : 44; 7 : 26, 27.

<sup>p</sup> 19 : 16; Deut. 10 : 17; 1 Tim. 6 : 15.

<sup>q</sup> 14 : 1-4; John 15 : 16; 1 Peter 2 : 9.

itself seems to have a life even when the main forms of an organized ungodly power have passed away.

**12.** This verse deals with the horns. These are all centered upon the seventh head, growing together upon it. These are ten kings; that is, ten kingdoms. By ten we are not to understand this exact number; it stands rather for all the organized forces that should arise subordinate to the great organized world powers. The number is entirely symbolical; there may be, so far as the number itself is concerned, ten or one hundred. However many there are, they are conceived of as ten—an entire number. It is folly to attempt to construct a list of exactly ten kingdoms that have arisen as the fulfilment of this statement. **No kingdom as yet.** This part of the vision refers to days beyond the period of John's time. John conceives of his own day as embraced in the sixth head of the beast, inasmuch as five have fallen. **Receive power**, rather, *authority*. The beast receives authority from the dragon (13 : 4); the authority here spoken of comes from the same source. **With the beast.** This means in subordination to the beast, and also conterminous with it. The six heads all ruled through and with the beast. After they fell the ten horns appear on the seventh head, and apparently they also seem to be perpetuated in the beast as such, after all the heads have disappeared. They rule one hour; a short period. This shortness is also expressed in ver. 10. This hour may embrace centuries; we are dealing, not with human ways of reckoning time, but with God's method of reckoning. Alford declares that these ten horns stand for ten kingdoms that shall arise

out of the destroyed Roman empire; ten European powers which, in the last ages, in concert with the Antichrist and in subordination to it, shall make war against Christ. Similarly Swete. This is too mathematical an explanation of this expression, not sufficiently regarding the symbolical usage of the entire book.

**13. These have one mind.** They are spoken of in the present tense, although they have not yet, in John's time, arisen. **And shall give . . . beast**, rather, *and they give their authority and power to the beast*. They have one mind, one intent and purpose; that is, to help the beast in his attack upon Christ and his cause. The second beast had helped the first beast in a like manner (13 : 12). The harlot also was in close alliance with the beast (17 : 3, 7). The brute power of the world is stirred up and helped by the false prophet, the second beast; and by the harlot, a corrupt church; and by the kings stirred up by the false church (17 : 2).

**14. These shall make war with the Lamb**, rather, *against*. There has been from the first a warfare against Jesus, begun at his birth, and continuing to the present day. The reference here is to a final and convulsive war against him. It is alluded to in 19 : 19. The Lamb has already been introduced in this book in chap. V, VI. He now appears in his character as the conquering Lord. They cannot overcome him because of the divinity of his person, **for . . . kings**. They are kings; he is King of kings. It is foolish and futile for them to wage war against such a person, so high in character, so mighty in power. It is foolish and wicked to fight against God

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. 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

and they who are with him are called, 15 and elect, and faithful. And he says to me, The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these will hate the harlot, and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh, and will

r Ver. 1; Isa. 8 : 7; 17 : 12, 13.

u 18 : 16, 17; Ezek. 16 : 37-44.

s 13 : 7, 8.

t Jer. 50 : 41, 42.

x 18 : 8.

(Acts 5 : 39). Jehovah shall laugh at his discomfited foes (Ps. 2 : 4). Jesus fights and overcomes, not only in himself, but also in and through his servants who are his allies. **And they . . . faithful**, rather, and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful. In all his ministry upon the earth Jesus works through and by means of his faithful men and women. They are his witnesses; he blesses their labors. Those who receive them, receive him (Matt. 10 : 40). Those who are faithful workers with Christ will share in the glory of his triumph, it is their victory as well as his. No one will be forgotten by him in the hour of triumph. They are described in a threefold way—called, chosen, faithful. A person may be called, but not chosen (Matt. 22 : 14). A person may be chosen, but not faithful to the highest degree (Luke 19 : 16, 18). These three terms indicate the highest kind of Christians. Every Christian may be one of this kind, realizing Christ's ideal. Jesus was, in his earthly ministry, a patient sufferer. He is now a patient Saviour. He will be manifest, in time, as a royal monarch. He will be, in manifestation, what he is in character.

The second part of the explanation by the angel begins here. Having spoken of the beast the author now gives some additional particulars concerning the woman not mentioned before.

15. The angel speaks of the universal sway of the woman. In the wilderness John sees in the vision many waters, the meaning of which is given. As the woman is spoken of as Babylon, it is fitting to associate with this name many waters, inasmuch as that city was situated on the Eu-

phrates. In chap. XIII the beast arose out of the sea with its mighty waters. These waters passionate, stirred by the wind, form a picture of her domain. The four terms, as elsewhere in this book, signify her widespread sway. Jehovah sits above the waters and reigns as king (Ps. 29 : 10). By a mocking imitation of God's wide rule she claims also a like wide rule.

**16. And the ten . . . beast**, rather, *And the ten horns that thou sawest and the beast*. John is now beholding, in the vision, a time when the seven heads have passed away, and the ten horns and the beast continue (ver. 11). The horns and the beast itself are represented as yet existing. It is the last stages of the history of the church. The great organized forces have been broken down, but the principle of evil yet remains. These have one mind; but that mind is now turned, in a destructive way, upon the harlot, fulfilling thereby God's vengeance upon her. Four statements are made concerning her fate. (1) **They shall hate the whore**, rather, *the harlot*. It is not stated what will lead to this changed attitude. She has been described as sitting upon the beast, ruling it. The fate of the woman was not revealed in the vision itself, it is now made known as an added feature. The hatred is the source of the results that follow. (2) **Desolate and naked**. She who had found allies and willing servants in the beast and horns, now finds herself deserted by them. She is deserted by all. **Naked**. She is stripped of her gaudy clothing and her power. (3) **Eat her flesh**. In the original this term is in the plural, indicating, perhaps, the masses of her flesh, the body having grown fleshy by luxuriant living. All her power she loses at once. The Old

17 with fire. <sup>y</sup> For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will; and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, <sup>x</sup> until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest <sup>z</sup> is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

17 burn her up with fire. For God put it into their hearts to do his will, even to do his purpose, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words 18 of God shall be accomplished. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth.

*y* Prov. 21:1; 2 Thess. 2:11.

*z* 10:7; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:10, 11.

*a* 14:8; 16:19.

Testament makes use of this expression, “to eat the flesh,” meaning injury to person and the despoiling of property (Ps. 27:2). (4) **Burn her with fire**, rather, *burn utterly with fire*. This was the Old Testament punishment for fornication (Lev. 20:14). What a contrast between the harlot now and in her queenly, reigning state. She remains a harlot still, but a destroyed harlot. It is again and again declared by one angel after another that judgment must come on the woman, on Babylon (18:1, 4-20, 21-24). We shall find it wise not to attempt to locate our age in the prophetic scheme. Nor may we attempt to locate in history the definite events which will be the perfect fulfilment of this vision. We may find many illustrations of the general principles here given, with this we should be content. The general principle is true that all unholy alliances will fall to pieces, that no weapon formed against God will prosper, that guilty men will turn upon each other, that God will make use of wicked men to bring punishment upon other wicked men, that God rules and overrules, making even sinful men work out his own righteous plans.

17. This verse gives an insight into the divine plan. The nations that spoil the harlot, act from their own motives. Back of all these, over and above them all, is God. **For** expresses the divine purpose that was operating in and through these secular rulers, the ten horns. **God hath put**, rather, *did put*. The past tense here is made use of to express the future. **Hearts . . . agree**, rather, *hearts to do his mind and to come to one mind*. They had no thought of God in their mind, their purpose was not to glorify him. But God, far above them, had his plan to strip the harlot of her beauty and her power. All unconsciously they carry out his purpose. In planning to

do their own will, they did also God's will. For a like use of malice and treachery so that they, in the end, served God's purpose, see the case of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 45:8). It is better to do God's will in love than to be used in a kind of mechanical way. **Beast.** It is not meant that it was God's approving design to have them serve the beast; he never approves of wrong-doing, for he is holy. This expression must be taken in connection with the next phrase, **until . . . fulfilled**, rather, *accomplished*. It is God's purpose that his words, his threats, his promises of a universal sovereignty, the triumph of his cause should be accomplished. In God's permission the horns served the beast until the time came for the powers, represented by the horns, to turn upon the woman and rend her. God can work upon and through his enemies without intruding upon their freedom of will or destroying their sense of responsibility, or taking away the sense of guilt. It is the wicked motive that makes the guilt. It was God's purpose that Babylon should fall; it had been so predicted, it must come to pass. We see that this result was brought about, not directly by his holy agencies, but indirectly through wicked agencies, working out at the same time their will and his will. God can make the wrath of man to serve him (Ps. 76:10).

18. This verse forms the transition to the next chapter, in which the figure of the woman is dropped, and Babylon takes her place. Both refer to the same thing. Sometimes she is a woman, a harlot, corrupting the world. And then she is a city, great in size, sovereign, full of enticements. **Reigneth.** Babylon had long since fallen. In John's day Rome was the great city of the world, having the widest sway. He may have had Rome in mind. In

both figures there is the symbol of an evil power. The two greatest seducing forces in the world may be a city resplendent with outward attractions, and a woman beautiful in person and attire, but corrupt in heart. Both of these John uses to depict the attractive powers that make war upon the Redeemer in all the ages.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Unfaithfulness to God begins in small ways, and grows insensibly. What Satan cannot do by violence he often succeeds in doing through the allurements of the world. Worldliness is more dangerous than persecution. It is a monstrous thing for a woman to become a harlot. It is equally monstrous for a follower of Christ to become faithless to Christ (ver. 1).

2. Causing others to sin is a deeper wrong than the sinning itself. This was the sin of Jeroboam (1 Kings 22 : 52). No one can go astray himself without leading others astray. It is impossible for a man to shut in his influence so as not to help or hinder others (ver. 2).

3. The bride and the Lamb are joined together; the harlot and the beast are joined together. The true Christian and the true church find delight in Christ; the apostate Christian and the apostate church find a delight in the world. Worldliness and godliness are the extremes of life (ver. 3).

4. Sin may present a gaudy attire. Piety may be clothed in rags and dwell in caves of the earth (Heb. 11 : 38). But it is better to follow Christ in rags than to be clothed in purple and fine linen and live in hell afterward (ver. 4; Luke 16 : 19, 23).

5. We must not look simply on the outside, the gold covering, but see what is inside. Hypocrisy, wickedness, abominations do not become morally beautiful because they are presented in enticing ways. Sin in a gold cup is more seductive than in an earthen jar (ver. 4).

6. It is a great help to Christ when his people wear his name upon the forehead, present him openly to men. It is a help to all when sin openly announces itself as sin (ver. 5).

7. To be a martyr is to be a witness.

Every age needs living witnesses. There may be no call to stand by the stake, but there is a great opportunity to live in such a way as to commend Christ to others. More courage is required to stand alone, to brave a corrupt public opinion than to suffer the loss of property (ver. 6).

8. What is beyond the power of our reason to understand we may accept. It is not unreasonable to accept teachings on the authority of Jesus. It is irrational to make our knowledge the measure of our belief. The teachable mind God will teach (ver. 8, 7).

9. God safeguards his people. He guides, guards, preserves, saves. He ministers help in the inner life, and by the constraints and restraints of his providence (ver. 8; Luke 22 : 31).

10. The census enrolls the names of the physically living. The church roll registers the names of the professedly regenerate. The book of life has the names of those who are really and spiritually alive (ver. 8; Luke 10 : 20).

11. There is sufficient light in the Scriptures to make plain the path to life for the honest inquirer. The hard places will be illuminated, at times, by the Holy Spirit, by earnest study, by an interpreting providence. Some Scriptures will remain unsolved until time explains them, some will not be plain until the light of eternity falls upon them (ver. 9).

12. The great kingdoms that once flourished are now dead. They perished, as a rule, through their wickedness and forgetfulness of God. Whatever opposes Christ must, in the end, come to an end (ver. 10).

13. Jesus is Lord as well as Saviour. He is strong as well as tender. We must not forget, misled by his forbearance, that he is judge and Lord. In his presence all kings are but as the dust of the earth. How should men fear to disobey him (ver. 14).

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

**THE FALL OF BABYLON.** In chap. XVII we had the picture of the unclean woman riding upon the beast. The process of destruction of God's foes has already begun. The judgment upon Babylon has a fearful prominence

*The fall of Babylon. Lamentation over her on earth.*

**18** AND <sup>b</sup> after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; <sup>c</sup> and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he

**18** AFTER these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he

*b* 17 : 1.

*c* Ezek. 43 : 2; 2 Thess. 2 : 8.

assigned to it. Its fall is brought to a close before the war against the kings of the earth; together with the beast and false prophet it is brought upon the stage, in the subsequent chapters. We deal, in this chapter, with figures and illustrations of outward things. But these outward things are but symbols of moral and spiritual forces at work in the world. Wrongs are put down and truth established in the earth, not by mechanical means, not by earthquakes, convulsions, and wars, but only by the prevalence of the truth, by the might of the Holy Spirit. In this chapter we have the same vision that we had in the last, but under another figure. It is no longer a woman, unclean, unfaithful, with intelligence and a perverted will, but a city large, dominant, unclean, a center of luxury, a source of corruption. It is unclean, as in the former case, but the teaching of degeneracy, the clean woman having given place to uncleanness, this is not emphasized. Babylon filled a large place in Old Testament history. At one time it was the mistress of Western Asia, a city, world-ruling in its sway, magnificent in its material aspect. There looms up in vision, before John, such a city, mighty, splendid in appearance, but destined to go down. We have the prophetic announcement of its fall (ver. 1-8); the summons to the Lord's people to leave it (ver. 4-8); the world's lamentation over its fall (ver. 9-20); the suddenness and irremediableness of its fall (ver. 21-24).

**1-3. THE FALL OF BABYLON ANNOUNCED.** We have met with the term Babylon before (14 : 8; 17 : 5). Its destruction has already been foretold (14 : 8). John does not here see the destruction of the city; the announcement is made by an angel. It is worthy of notice that nowhere does a judgment come without the distinct association of the judgment with sin and guilt. God is not at all the almighty God, apart from a shining

holiness of nature that is compelled by its own holiness to assert itself in punishment.

**1. After these things.** This vision comes after the preceding in order of time. But it is evident that the book is not built up on a chronological plan, for it is stated in ver. 5 that the city has not yet fallen, after the assertion that it is fallen. **And, omit. Another angel.** This distinguishes this angel from the one introduced in the preceding chapter. Some regarding especially the phrase, *come down from heaven*, distinguish this angel from the one announced in 10 : 1. Three statements are made concerning this angel: (1) the source whence it came, **heaven**; (2) its rank, **having great power**, rather, *authority*; (3) its splendor, **lightening the earth**. The coming from heaven shows the certainty of the events predicted, also the holiness of the punishment. It is fanciful to refer this appearance to Jesus or the Holy Spirit, or Luther, introducing the Reformation. The great authority is shown in the announcement itself, and in the destruction of the city, as though the angel were the means of the fall. It would be unfitting for an inferior angel to come with so great an announcement. There are gradations in the higher order of beings, as in nature and in the heavens. In like manner there will be gradations among the saved (Luke 19 : 17, 18). The last statement is taken from Ezek. 43 : 2. The earth became luminous with the glory of the angel. The entire earth will be brightened with the enlarging knowledge of God, the manifestation of God's holiness, the disappearance of the darkening powers of wickedness. There is a symbolic statement of this teaching—God purposes, as the result of his power and holiness, to overthrow utterly the spiritual Babylon, and this will be as though the earth were filled with light.

cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, <sup>d</sup>Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and <sup>e</sup>is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and <sup>f</sup>a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations <sup>g</sup>have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, <sup>h</sup>and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

d 14 : 8.

e Isa. 13 : 19-22; Jer. 51 : 37.

f Isa. 14 : 23.

g 14 : 8; 17 : 2.

h Ver. 11, 15; Isa. 47 : 15.

cried with a strong voice, saying, Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Because by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations have fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich by the power of her luxury.

**2. Cried . . . voice,** rather, *cried with a mighty voice*, that it might sound through every part of the great city. In a real way Jonah went through Nineveh announcing its fall (*Jonah 3 : 4*). **Babylon . . . fallen,** rather, *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great*. The key to this statement is found in the last verse of the preceding chapter, “and the woman which thou sawest is that great city.” The city is the woman under another aspect. Having used the figure of the unclean woman to show her uncleanness and her degeneracy, in a manner which could not be shown by the figure of a city, he now passes to another figure, that of a city, to show its greatness, its luxury, its profligacy, and the sudden and irremediable downfall. Through this entire chapter the figure is rigorously and perfectly kept hold of. It is a figure very striking and bold. The term *fallen* shows the certainty of the prophecy. It is as though it were already completed. The repetition of the words, as in the case of the Saviour’s “verily,” is very impressive. It is the death knell of the ungodly system. The following expressions show how profound the desolation is, **the . . . devils,** rather, *habitation of demons*. The great city is conceived of as a mass of ruins, where the demons that delight in calamity and desolation dwell. Jesus speaks in a figurative way of evil spirits traversing desert places (*Matt. 12 : 43*). The Arabians of to-day regard all the mounds of deserted cities as inhabited by evil spirits. **Hold . . . spirit.** The word rendered *hold* means a cage or prison. Unclean spirits love unclean and foul places, hence, figuratively, they are said to dwell here as in a prison house. **Cage**

**. . . bird,** rather, *hold*. The unclean bird inhabits the place of pollution and filth. Through these expressions John emphasizes the utter ruin of the place, and depicts its ruins as centers of uncleanness, moral filth, where the unclean spirits and birds find a fitting abode. Isaiah has a like picture in 13 : 21. See the prophecy concerning Babylon in *Jer. 50 : 39*.

**3.** This verse assigns the reason for its fall. The city sowed sin, it reaped judgment. **For . . . fornication,** rather, *For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen*. The words are a reminiscence of 17 : 2. The city has proved a curse to other nations, leading them astray by her uncleanness. The completeness of her wrong-doing is shown by her enticements to three classes, **nations, kings, merchants.** She has poisoned, by her seductions, the national life, political authorities, the business relations of men. **A abundance of her delicacies,** rather, *by the power of her wantonness*. The picture is that of a great city making all tributary to her through her traffic. Rome has been and is called by many Babylon, on account of its haughtiness, its cruel spirit in persecution, its vast power in the past over nations and kings. There is a wide contrast here between the former splendor, attracting all nations, and her present condition, the dwelling-place of unclean birds and beasts. Her sin is that of greed, of glutinous living, of ungodliness.

**4-8. THE SUMMONS TO THE GODLY TO LEAVE THE CITY.** We have here another stage in the sacred drama. A vision meets us that shows us that the city has not yet been destroyed. The

**4** And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, <sup>1</sup>Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. <sup>2</sup>For her sins have reached unto heaven, and <sup>3</sup>God hath remembered her iniquities. <sup>4</sup>Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: <sup>5</sup>in the cup which she hath filled <sup>6</sup>fill

<sup>i</sup> Isa. 48 : 20; Zech. 2 : 7; 2 Cor. 6 : 17; Gen. 19.

<sup>l</sup> 16 : 19.

<sup>m</sup> 13 : 10; Ps. 137 : 8; Jer. 50 : 15, 29; 51 : 24, 49; 2 Tim. 4 : 14.

<sup>n</sup> 17 : 4; Jer. 51 : 7.

<sup>4</sup> And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not 5 of her plagues. Because her sins cleave together even to heaven, and God remembered her iniquities. Reward her as she also rewarded, and double the double according to her works; In the cup which she mingled, mingle for her

<sup>k</sup> Gen. 18 : 20, 21; Jer. 51 : 9; Jonah 1 : 2.

<sup>o</sup> 16 : 19.

<sup>p</sup> 16 : 19.

preceding announcement must be taken, therefore, in a prophetic way, the certain doom is soon to follow. Before the doom comes the people of God must be called from the city. This thought is not a new one in this book, and in the entire Scriptures. Noah was called out of the world of the wicked before the flood came. Lot was led out of Sodom because Jehovah could do nothing until he had escaped (Gen. 19 : 22). It is a part of God's holy nature, when he sends a judgment upon the world, to draw a dividing line between the righteous and the wicked (Mal. 3 : 18).

**4. Another voice.** We must not understand this as the voice of Christ. As in other cases, it is a symbolic representation of God's will. **Come . . . her**, rather, *Come forth out of her*. There must be an entire separation, as when Pilgrim fled from the city of destruction. **My people**. The angel speaks not from himself, but for God, whose he is. He speaks in the divine behalf. Two reasons are assigned, one arising from fear of personal moral defilement, the other from fear of personal danger. **Not partakers of her sins**, rather, *have no fellowship*. It is perilous to dwell in the midst of sin, even for the godly. Sin is contagious, enervating and weakening the moral nature. If sealed with God's seal, even yet must God's people walk with care, watching over the steps (7 : 3; 1 Cor. 5 : 6). **Plagues**. Jeremiah the prophet, announcing the fall of Babylon, exhorted the people to flee from it (50 : 8; 51 : 6). The people of Israel were exhorted to flee from the tents of the guilty conspirators against Moses (Num. 16 : 28). Jesus warned his own disciples to escape from Jerusalem when the Roman

armies encamped before the city (Matt. 24 : 16). In God's ordinary procedure the sun and hail come equally upon all, regardless of character (Matt. 5 : 45). But when he sends penalties for sin he discriminates. The Judge of all the earth does righteousness (Gen. 18 : 25). We find this truth in many passages (Isa. 48 : 20; 52 : 11). A wicked Babylon might feel that all within her walls were safe; a righteous prophet outside might feel that all in the city would be rightfully condemned. The holy God sees some of his own people in the city. He desires their separation and their salvation.

**5.** This verse gives a reason for the plagues that are coming. **For . . . unto heaven**, rather, *even unto heaven*. The figure is that of sins piled up until they reach the heaven. Some sins are more aggravated than others. **Remembered**. The righteous sometimes forget that God remembers, and discouragement comes. The wicked forget that God remembers, and there arises a comfort in sin and increasing wickedness. The remembrance here indicated is the same as retribution.

**6. Reward . . . you**, rather, *Render unto her even as she rendered*. This is spoken by the angel, and is addressed, not to the saints in the city, but to the ministries of justice appointed by God to act as his agents. We see in 17 : 16 the ten horns reading the unclean woman. According to the law of retribution in Exod. 22 : 4, 7, 9, she is to receive double. (See also Jer. 16 : 18.) Her punishment will be in proportion to her sins. See for this principle the words of Jesus in Luke 12 : 47, 48. Compare also Isa. 40 : 2; Jer. 17 : 18. **Hath filled**, rather, *mingled*. This presents, as in Hebrew

7 to her double. <sup>p</sup> 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. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and <sup>s</sup>she shall be utterly burned with fire: <sup>t</sup>for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9 And <sup>u</sup>the kings of the earth, who

7 twofold. By as much as she glorified herself, and lived luxuriously, so much torment and mourning give her; because in her heart she says, I sit a queen, and am not a widow, and shall see no mourning. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be burned up with fire; because strong is the Lord God who judged her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who com-

<sup>p</sup> Isa. 47: 1-3; Ezek. 28: 2, etc.

<sup>q</sup> Isa. 47: 7, 8; Zeph. 2: 15.

<sup>r</sup> Ver. 10; Isa. 47: 9-11.

<sup>s</sup> 17: 16; Jer. 51: 58.

<sup>t</sup> 11: 17; Job 9: 19; Isa. 27: 1; Jer. 50: 34.

<sup>u</sup> Ver. 3; 17: 2; Ezek. 26: 16, 17.

poetry, the same thought as in the preceding statement. She gave the cup of her fornication to others, she will be compelled to drink the cup of wrath.

**7. How much . . . heart.** Her heart was lifted high in boasting; for her boasting will come, a corresponding humiliation. Her pride precedes an utter destruction. **Deliciously**, rather, *wantonly*. Luxury in living is often joined with a wantonness in life, the one inducing the other. **In her heart.** The heart is the man; what a man really thinks, that he is. There is a deep-seated nature of sinful boasting which comes out in words and in actions. Three things formed the foundation of the boasting: (1) her position of honor, a ruler, a queen among cities. **I sit a queen.** Such was the literal Babylon; (2) she is not deserted, exposed to poverty, in the abject state in which widows were in the East, where too often no justice is found, **widow**; (3) her life had not been filled with **sorrow**, rather, *mourning*, as if for the dead. On the other hand her life had been filled with peace and joy. For a mistaken estimate of life see the words of Jesus in 3: 17.

**8. Therefore** shows the moral connection between the two verses. Breaking God's laws will always bring a harvest, if we wait long enough. She was a queen, but **plagues** came on her. They come suddenly and in triumph, **in one day**. Death causes a widowhood in actual life. In like manner here, as if by the death of a husband or supporter, an utter destruction brings a widowhood, mourning, famine, complete helplessness.

**Burned.** As in actual warfare the fire finished what the army did not

destroy, so here the destruction shall be as if it were burned with fire. Fire was also, in certain cases, the punishment of the harlot (Lev. 20: 14). This will happen in accordance with God's moral laws. He is a **strong** God. He is a holy God, and therefore he **Judgeth**, rather, *judged* her. God will make use of direct and indirect agencies to serve his purpose in breaking down his foes. In 18: 16 we see one method of God's working to destroy the unclean woman, who is also Babylon. God sent a flood, opened the earth, struck a man dead. He sends confusion to the counsels of the wicked, frustrates the plans of the ungodly, adds new power to the truth, gives in larger measure the Holy Spirit, blesses the endeavors of his people. God has pledged his word to build up the walls of the holy Jerusalem, to break down the walls of wicked Babylon.

**9-20. LAMENTATIONS OVER THE FALL OF THE CITY.** Judgment is now supposed to have fallen upon the city. As a result we see the world mourning over her fall. In 11: 10 the world rejoiced over the death of the two witnesses; here it sorrows over the fall of the harlot, the wicked city. The mourners are divided into three classes. As there are three groups of visions, so here are three groups of mourners, embracing all those who mourn the fall of the city. The entire lament is like that of Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem in his lamentation, though the moral and spiritual tone is entirely different. The structure and spirit of the entire passage are founded upon the lamentation over the fall of Tyre in Ezek. 26, 27.

The mourning of the kings, ver. 9, 10.

**9. Kings.** When the harlot fell it

have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her \* when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, 10 saying, *r 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: <sup>b</sup> 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 13 of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments,

mitted fornication and lived luxuriously with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they see the smoke of 10 her burning; standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, *Woe, woe, the great city Babylon, the strong city!* Because in one hour thy judgment is come.

11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one 12 buys their merchandise any more; the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all citron wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel of most precious wood, and brass, and iron, and 13 marble, and cinnamon, and amomum, and odours, and ointment, and frank-

*z Ver. 18; 19: 3. y 14: 8; Isa. 13: 19; 14: 4; 21: 9.*

*a Ver. 3; Isa. 47: 15; Ezek. 27: 27-36.*

*z Ver. 17, 19; Jer. 51: 8, 9.*

*b 17: 4.*

was because she was made desolate through the ten horns (17: 16) which stand, in some way, for great world powers, ungodly in their nature, yet doing God's will. By *kings* here John means simply one class of the many in the world who hate God's kingdom, who love unrighteousness, and who have followed the false teachings of the great city. **Deliciously**, rather, *wantonly*. These have lived spiritually unclean lives, denoted by the terms fornication and wantonness. It usually happens that a departure from God leads to moral uncleanness, as was the case in Greece and Rome, and is now true in India, where licentiousness is in many cases a recognized feature of worship. **Shall bewail . . . her**, rather, *shall weep and bewail over her*. For the effect of the fall of the Old Testament Babylon, read Jer. 50: 46. The sorrow is spoken of as in the future.

**10.** The kings are represented as standing afar off lest they be injured by the conflagration. It is not sympathy so much as a selfish caring for themselves. **Alas . . . Babylon**, rather, *Woe, woe, the great city Babylon*. Something similar is said of Tyre in Ezek. 26: 15, 16. The various appellations, great city, strong city, show how great must be the power that could destroy it, and how great the guilt also that could bring down such a heavy judgment. **In one hour**. This same expression occurs in 17: 19. A few days would suffice

to destroy a large city. God's judgments sometimes come very rapidly. Great moral forces, by which wrongs are overcome and right effected, often accumulate slowly, but work with rapidity and force at the last.

Lamentation of the merchants, ver. 11-16. The second group of mourners is the mercantile class.

**11. Merchants of the earth.** In this case, as in the case of the kings, they are people of the earth, earthly minded. **Shall weep**, rather, *weep*. The narrative passes to the present tense. It is as though the destruction were drawing nearer and nearer. A great city like Babylon puts the whole world under tribute for its supplies of necessity and luxury. In ver. 3 the merchants grow rich through traffic with her.

**12, 13.** In these verses we have a long list of articles that were in demand in a city like Babylon. We are not called upon to give a definite spiritual meaning for each term used. This is not in John's mind. Objects such as these would be in constant demand in such a city, and as such they are named. The larger the list, the more impressive is the desolation that follows. We have, first, a group of the treasures of civilized life, **gold . . . pearls**; we have next the luxurious clothing, **fine linen . . . scarlet**; the materials used in costly dwellings, **thyine** (sweet scented wood) . . . **marble**; aromatics and spices, **cinnamon . . . frankincense**; articles

and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep; and horses, and chariots,  
 14 and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after  
 15 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, and saying,  
 16 Alas! alas! that great city, 'that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!' for in one hour so great riches is come to nought.

And <sup>b</sup>every shipmaster, and all the

incense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and of horses, and chariots, and slaves; and souls of men. And the fruit that thy soul desired departed from thee, and all the dainty and goodly things perished from thee, and they shall find them no more. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearl; because in one hour so great riches are made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that

c Ezek. 27:13.

d Luke 12:20; 16:25.

e Ver. 3, 11.

f 17:4.

g Ver. 10; Isa. 47:11.

h Isa. 23:14; Ezek. 27:29.

of food and drink, **wine . . . flour;** the adjuncts of toil and war, **horses, . . . chariots;** their attendants, **slaves, and souls of men.** The articles are named in a methodical way. They show that everything is under tribute to supply the necessities and luxuries of the great city. Some have conceived of the expression *souls of men*, as indicating a traffic in the spiritual part of man as distinct from the body, as though Babylon were dealing in the souls of men as an article of merchandise, and causing their loss. But the expression cannot mean this. The word rendered *souls* means as in Ezek. 27:13, persons, in this case referring to slaves. The word rendered *slaves* means literally bodies, and refers here, inasmuch as it is joined to horses and chariots, to hired persons as distinguished from slaves. This is the view of Meyer and Alford. It is true that false systems of faith have dealt in the souls of men, beguiling them with falsities that were ruinous to the soul. But this is not the meaning of this passage. We must not crowd in spiritual meanings, unless the passage itself calls for them. Human slavery was everywhere, in ancient times, recognized as an essential part of society. While Jesus gave no express command forbidding slavery, the spirit of his teachings has everywhere destroyed it.

**14.** Ver. 14 is an apostrophe to the doomed city. **Goodly,** rather, *sumptuous.* **Thou shalt find,** rather,

*men shall find.* Luxuriousness and gluttony are mentioned as sins of the city. Like a dream, all the things that contributed to their pleasure have departed from them.

**15, 16.** These verses correspond with ver. 9, 10. They stand afar off in selfish fear of being injured by the burning city. They also weep, not so much in sympathy, as for the loss of trade. Every incident mentioned is suggestive. They cry *Alas*, rather, *Woe.* The city, pictured as a woman, is clothed in the finest apparel, decked with jewelry. The material splendors alone are mourned for. The scarlet is a reminiscence of 17:4.

**17, 18. Come to nought,** rather, *is made desolate.* The **one hour** involves the idea of suddenness. It does not mean the one hour of our time. Long ages may even be embraced in this expression. It is easier to tear down than to build up.

The lament of the shipmasters, ver. 17-19. The third class of mourners is now introduced, that of the sailor class. These also lament the loss of trade. Taken altogether they embrace the varied interests of commerce and material concerns.

Heretofore we had the dwellers on land, now to make the description all-comprehensive, we have all those on the sea or connected with it. We have four classes mentioned: (1) **Shipmaster.** In the original the word means steersman, but it corresponds very nearly with our shipmaster. (2)

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, <sup>k</sup> What city is like unto this great city! And <sup>l</sup> they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas! alas! that great city, wherin were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! <sup>m</sup> for in one hour is she made desolate.

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

sails to any place, and seamen, and as many as do business at sea, stood afar off, and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads, and cried out, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that have the ships in the sea became rich by reason of her costliness; because in one hour she is made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; because God judged your judgment on her.

<sup>i</sup> Ver. 9; Isa. 34:10; Ezek. 27:30, 31.

<sup>k</sup> 13:4.

<sup>l</sup> Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; Job 2:12; Ezek. 27:30.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 8.

<sup>n</sup> 19:1-3; Isa. 49:13; Jer. 51:48.

<sup>o</sup> 6:10; 19:2; Luke 11:49, 50; 18:7, 8.

**All the company in ships,** rather, *and every one that sailth anywhere.* This embraces all who are connected with the management of ships. (3) **Sailors,** rather, *mariners.* (4) **Trade by sea,** rather, *gain their living.* This embraces fishermen, and all persons in any way gaining a livelihood from the sea. It is a picturesque and graphic description, giving in detail all classes of persons connected with the sea. **Cried.** We pass here from the future tense of ver. 9, from the present tense of ver. 11, to the past tense, where the destruction is looked at as though already in the past. **What city.** The same praise is given to the beast in 13:4.

**19. Cast dust.** This is the Oriental expression of deepest sorrow. The same custom may be observed in the East to-day. **Wailing,** rather, *mourning.* **Alas, alas,** rather, *Woe, woe.* **Costliness.** This refers to the costly things used by her, making demand for the use of vessels. **Desolate.** This sad refrain is found in ver. 10, 17, and here. The desolation and its suddenness are emphasized. The imagery of the entire chapter is largely taken from Ezek. 26, 27, where the capture and destruction of Tyre are spoken of. In character Tyre resembled Babylon, insomuch that it is called in Isa. 24:10 a city of confusion, that is, a Babylon.

**20.** This verse stands in a wide contrast with the preceding classes of mourners. The judgment is now regarded as having taken place. The righteous everywhere, in heaven and on earth, are called upon to rejoice,

The voice that speaks is that of the angel. **Heaven** is called upon to rejoice, as in 13:12. The believers on earth are divided into three classes, as in the case of the mourners. **Heaven** is also mentioned to show, in this direct way, that the destruction comes from the holy God, and is justified by the facts of the case. **Saints.** This is a general designation of all believers on earth. They are regarded as set apart to God's service; they are also thereby holy in character. **Holy apostles,** rather, *apostles, prophets.* These two classes are mentioned, embraced in the general term of saints, because on them would first and principally fall the vengeance of a persecuting worldly power. They would feel especially thankful. If the term *prophet* is used in its Old Testament sense, then the vision has reference to persecutions under both covenants. If it is used in its New Testament sense (Eph. 4:10) the vision has reference to the New Testament times only. **Hath avenged you on her,** rather, *hath judged your judgment upon her.* God had treasured up in his mind all the injustice and wrong done to his saints. In now visiting upon Babylon his judgment, it is fittingly called *your judgment.* Through it God expresses his satisfaction with believers, and justifies their conduct in opposing and condemning their great foe. God seems to forget, but in time his judgments will be made manifest. He identifies the wrongs done to his people as done to himself. His judgment is, at the same time, their judgment. This is a legitimate rejoicing in which all holy men may join over

- 21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, <sup>r</sup>Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and <sup>s</sup>shall be found no more at all. <sup>t</sup>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 <sup>he</sup> be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; <sup>u</sup>and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; <sup>v</sup>and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee. For <sup>w</sup>thy merchants were the great men of the earth; <sup>x</sup>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 <sup>y</sup>were slain upon the earth.
- 21 And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall Babylon the great city be cast down, and shall be found no more.
- 22 And the voice of harpers and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard in thee no more; and no craftsman, of whatever craft, shall be found any more in thee, and the voice of a millstone shall be heard in thee no more; and the light of a lamp shall shine in thee no more; and the voice of bridegroom and of bride shall be heard in thee no more; because thy merchants were the great men of the earth; because by thy sorcery all the nations were led astray. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that have been slain on the earth.

<sup>p</sup> Exod. 15 : 5; Jer. 51 : 63, 64.      <sup>q</sup> 12 : 8; Ezek. 26 : 24.      <sup>r</sup> Isa. 24 : 8; Jer. 16 : 9; 25 : 10; Ezek. 26 : 13.  
<sup>s</sup> Jer. 25 : 10.      <sup>t</sup> Jer. 7 : 34.      <sup>u</sup> Isa. 23 : 8, 9.  
<sup>x</sup> 12 : 9; 13 : 13-16; 17 : 2, 5; Isa. 47 : 9; Nahum 3 : 4.      <sup>y</sup> 16 : 6; 17 : 6.      <sup>z</sup> Jer. 51 : 49; Matt. 23 : 35.

the downfall of the wicked (6 : 10). Wrong-doing always begets a fearful penalty (16 : 5-7).

**21-24. THE FATE OF BABYLON SHOWN BY THE STONE CAST INTO THE SEA.** A third angel is introduced, the first having appeared in 17 : 1, the second in 18 : 1. This mighty angel is depicted as casting a great stone into the sea, whereby is significantly shown the utter and sudden desolation of the city. He not only performs the act, but explains the meaning of the act.

**21. Mighty, rather, strong.** This is a fitting attribute of an angel who performs so great an act. **Stone.** One has but to read Jer. 51 : 60-64 to see how this reproduces an Old Testament scene in reference to Babylon. What took place there literally, takes place here figuratively in reference to the mystical Babylon. The millstone is not a small one turned by hand (Matt. 21 : 41), but a large one turned by an ass (Mark 9 : 42), better fitted to symbolize the destruction of a great city. The angel adds the words: **Thus . . . down,** rather, *Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down.* The imagery here changes, but without any change in the thought presented. In the preceding verses the city is destroyed by fire; here it is, as it were, thrown into the sea and disappears from sight.

**23, 23.** These verses dwell on the desolation of the city. **Pipers,** rather, *flute players.* Music would die out. (Comp. Isa. 24 : 8.) In a striking way he recounts the utter solitude of the place. **Candle,** rather, *lamp.* All is darkness, family life is extinct, trade is dead. (Comp. Jer. 25 : 10.) Three reasons are assigned by the angel for the fall of the city. (1) **For . . . earth.** Those who brought to Babylon the objects of her luxurious life, found in her wealth and extravagance the sources of their own wealth, whereby they became the great men of the earth. (2) **Sorceries . . . deceived.** Her licentiousness had led astray nations and kings, as she brought them into her service. The word rendered *sorcery* means, in the original, the love potion given by a harlot to excite the animal passions. It is applied here to any seduction to sinful living. The third reason is given in the next verse.

**24.** Here is shown her hostility to the saints. Persecutions had killed the **prophets,** the spokesmen for God, and the **saints,** the holy men, because they were holy. Compare the words of Jesus in Matt. 23 : 35, 36.

Swete takes Babylon to signify Rome. He explains: "But Rome does not, of course, exhaust St. John's conception of Babylon. His vision sounds a note of warning, which may well be

taken to heart by any great metropolis which prostitutes its wealth and influence to base or self-seeking ends. . . Other ages may witness the rise and fall of other mistresses of the world not less magnificent and depraved"—on 17 : 18. Many recent commentators take Babylon to signify pagan Rome. But see Appendix.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The angels are a superior order of beings, having authority, glorious in person. They delight to serve God in all ways. How they act for men in daily affairs, influencing life, we may not know. They are helpers of God, servants of the saints (ver. 1; Heb. 1 : 14).

2. Babylon was great, but God was greater. God is supremely holy, therefore Babylon went down finally and utterly. We sometimes see how God works that we may know the principles on which, in time, he will bring all ungodliness under condemnation (ver. 2).

3. Judgments do not come by chance. They always result from God's broken moral laws. He keeps track of broken laws and sinful lives, whether of men or nations (ver. 3).

4. Christians are to be a separate people. A church that goes down to the world will lose its spirituality, and have no power to lift the world up (ver. 4).

5. The Christian must not desert the world, but leaven it by his presence. He must take an interest in men, living close to them that he may lift them up (ver. 4).

6. God remembers unpardoned iniquities. There is a blessed forgetfulness in God in that he remembers pardoned sins no more (Jer. 31 : 34). They are as if they had not been. God's remembrance is the foundation for an equitable administration of justice in the future life (ver. 5).

7. The law of increase is one of God's laws. A man reaps more than he sows. God will graciously reward his people according to their works. Sins also will bring a recompense of reward. God does not retaliate, but he has so framed his moral laws that what a man sows that he also reaps (ver. 6).

8. Pride of heart goes before destruction. Nebuchadnezzar's pride brought him to the condition of the beast of the

field. The man who humbles himself shall be exalted. Sin always blinds a man to the real condition of his heart (ver. 7).

9. Nothing is too hard for God. He is strong and holy. Therefore judgments come from his administration. Pharaoh resisted God and failed. Every pharaoh must fail, whoever he be (ver. 8).

10. The cause of mourning should be, not the punishment, but the sin from which the punishment comes. Sin mourned over will secure pardon. Punishment mourned over brings no change of heart, but adds only additional sorrow. The sorrow of the world works death; the godly sorrow works life and peace (ver. 9).

11. Sometimes God works with great rapidity and suddenness. He patiently waits for years and then, in a moment, the judgment comes. In the twinkling of an eye the living will be changed (1 Cor. 15 : 52). When he comes in judgment, none can hinder (ver. 10).

12. If riches consist of outward and material things only, they must be temporary. Fire or storm may destroy them. Abiding riches are unseen (ver. 12, 13).

13. If a good man fall he will rise again. Even seven falls will not destroy him (Prov. 24 : 16). His fall may even prove a blessing to him and to others (Luke 22 : 32). The fall of the wicked is absolute and final (ver. 14; 1 John 2 : 11).

14. In troubles God is with his people to share their troubles with them. The wicked are quite apt to stand afar off when their friends come under God's judgments. They can be of no help (ver. 15).

15. Outward adornments and beautiful possessions are not wrong in themselves. Riches and power are not wrong. When outward things minister to pride, and cause men to forget God, they will soon give place to garments of mourning. The rich man changed places with the beggar in rags (ver. 16; Luke 16 : 19-23).

16. If nations are punished, they must be punished in the present existence, for they have no resurrection. God does deal with nations that do not do his will. Heavy penalties come on nations that traffic in unrighteousness. God has a

*The fall of Babylon—Fourfold joy and praise in heaven.*

**19** AND after these things \*I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying,

a 11 : 15 ; 18 : 20.

judgment day for nations in the present life (ver. 19).

17. The saints do not rejoice in misfortunes to the ungodly. They ought to rejoice at the downfall of the plans of the ungodly, and the triumph of righteousness. When God introduces a triumphant righteousness, the saints cannot help rejoicing (ver. 20).

18. All the prophecies in the Bible must be fulfilled. Nothing can stand against God's word. Nature will help bring to pass the supernatural prediction. Wicked men will unconsciously bring the promise to pass. Jesus proclaims his word as more enduring than the laws of nature (ver. 21; Mark 13 : 31).

19. A great change takes place for the wicked when God comes in judgment. The rich man takes his place in a world of torment. The rich farmer leaves all to others (Luke 12 : 20). Music, luxury, and enjoyment give way to darkness, wretchedness, and pain (ver. 22).

20. Two places will have no candles. Heaven will need none, for all is light. God's presence makes constant sunshine. Hell will have none, for the outer darkness dwells there. No joy or light comes there at all (ver. 23).

21. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church. None have lived more really after their death than those who were faithful unto death. But God will hold guilty those who laid violent hands on his witnesses. In our day witnesses are needed more to live for Christ than to die for him (ver. 24).

## CHAPTER XIX.

**1-10. A SONG OF TRIUMPH OVER THE FALL OF BABYLON.** In this chapter we have two leading thoughts. The first is the song of rejoicing over the fall of Babylon. The second is the destruction of the other foes of Christ and his church, the beast and the false prophet. The song of this

**19** AFTER these things, I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude

chapter is the natural outcome and conclusion of the two preceding chapters, in which an account is given of the destruction of the unclean woman and of the great Babylon. It ought fittingly to be joined to chap. XVIII. In 18 : 6 an appeal is made to God's holy agencies to punish the city, and then the heavens, with their holy inhabitants, are called upon to rejoice. Here we have heaven opened to us that we may behold the rejoicing there. Heaven and earth are close together, inasmuch as that which takes place here interests the world above. We must not infer from the pictorial representation here that the rejoicing will, in a historical and actual way, take place before the other enemies are destroyed. In this book the three series of visions run side by side, so that all the series are in process of fulfilment at the same time. In like manner, there is a constant warfare waged against all the foes of Christ. In a vision we can see only one teaching at a time. As a matter of fact, there is always the manifestation of God's opposition to the unclean woman, the beast, and false prophet. In 18 : 14, before the fall of the great city, it is stated that there exists a war between the Lamb and the kings of the earth. We must not expect to find in this chapter a precise and orderly manifestation of the steps by which God will subjugate the world with its powers to himself. Following the destruction of the harlot there comes naturally an enlarged success of the gospel in winning souls from sin, the renewed power of the true church, and the preparation of the bride to meet her Lord. The marriage of the Lamb, the close intimacy of the redeemed people with the Redeemer, comes naturally, as we hasten toward the closing scenes of this holy drama.

**1. Omit And.** This takes place in close connection with the preceding. **Heard . . . heaven**, rather, **heard, as it were, a great voice of a great mult-**

**b Alleluia!**

**c 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,

in heaven, saying, Hallelujah ; the salvation, and the glory, and the power, are our God's; because true and righteous are his judgments ; because he judged the great harlot, who corrupted the earth with her fornication,

**d Ps. 150 : 1.**

**e 4 : 11; 7 : 10, 12; 12 : 10.**

**d 15 : 3; 16 : 7.**

**e 17 : 1, 2.**

*titude.* The term *heaven*, as used here, does not necessarily mean the region beyond the grave, but rather the collection of the righteous, the spiritual, the unworldly, whether on earth or in heaven. Miriam sang over the triumph at the Red Sea (*Exod. 15*). Deborah sung when the Israelites triumphed over the Canaanites (*Judg. 5*). The beginning of Luke's Gospel is full of the songs of rejoicing at the successive disclosures of the plan of redemption. In this book we have a succession of songs. Every new disclosure of God's power and mercy calls for a song. In 4 : 18 we have a song at the introduction of the entire sacred drama; in 5 : 9 the creation bursts into song when the Lamb takes the book from the hand of the Father; in 7 : 10 and 11 : 15 there is rejoicing when God's hand falls heavily at the sounding of the seventh trumpet; in 15 : 3 there is a song at the introduction of the vials; in 16 : 5 we have a song at the pouring out of the third bowl. The song is an intelligent recognition of the progress of God's cause. There is a wide contrast between the lamentations of chap. XVIII and the praises of this chapter. It is an index of the moral character to know what gives occasion for rejoicing. **Alleluia**, rather, *Hallelujah*. This means "Praise to Jehovah." It is found in the New Testament in this book alone (*ver. 3, 4, 6*). Some have inferred from its use here now for the first time, that it signifies that the Jews, making use of this Old Testament expression, have now been converted to Christ and join in the song. This interpretation lays an undue stress upon the expression. We move, in this book, among Old Testament expressions and figures. The expression here means simply that now, when the cause of Christ has received a final and supreme evidence of God's favor, that the heart finds it a fitting tribute

of praise to a covenant-keeping Jehovah, God over all. **Salvation . . . God**, rather, *salvation and glory and power belong to our God*. In the Greek, the definite article stands before each term, making it more impressive. God has now wrought out a salvation for his cause as a whole, as well as for his people one by one. Salvation is here used in a large sense as involving the removal of all things that resist, and the introduction of all blessed agencies. He is a God whose glory shines in and through his power. God's moral excellencies awake their praise.

**2. For** shows that the praise proceeds from moral considerations. **True, righteous.** The term, *true*, does not mean the opposite of falsehood, but the opposite of that which has only an appearance. Christ is the truth; that is, not only veracity, but reality, as opposed to a seeming. The foundation of God's government is not his almighty ness, but his truth and righteousness. **Whore, rather, harlot.** **Corrupted.** The imperfect tense of this verb shows that it was the continuous manner of the harlot to work corruption. **Earth** shows the world-wide extent of the destroying work. Two crimes are laid to her charge, seduction and persecution. The figure has been changed here to that of the unclean woman as in chap. XVII. What she did in shedding blood has now, in God's retributive power, come back upon her again. The corruption of the harlot was the seed, the judgment of God is the ripened harvest. The term *judgment* cannot be defined accurately. In this book, in accordance with the nature of the visions, every act of judgment is pictured in an outward way. But it is not of necessity any outward penalty. It involves rather all the dealings of God in his providence, and all intellectual, moral, and spiritual agencies by which

And <sup>1</sup> hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

<sup>3</sup> And again they said, Alleluia!

And <sup>2</sup> her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

<sup>4</sup> And <sup>3</sup> the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, <sup>4</sup>Amen, Alleluia!

<sup>5</sup> And a voice came out of the throne,

and avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And a second time they said, Hallelujah. And her smoke goes up forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, fell down and worshiped God, who sits on the throne, saying, Amen, 5 Hallelujah. And a voice came out

*f* 6 : 10; 18 : 20; Deut. 32 : 43.

*g* 14 : 11; 18 : 9, 18; Isa. 34 : 10.

*h* 4 : 4-10; 5 : 14.

*i* 5 : 14; 1 Chron. 16 : 36; Neh. 8 : 6; Matt. 6 : 13.

God displays his opposition, and through which he would weaken the power of an apostate church to corrupt the minds of men. **Blood.** God made provision for avenging the shedding of all human blood (Gen. 9 : 6). How much more will he care for the blood of his own children. It has been suggested also that the spirit of hatred would be, in reality, something akin to blood that has been shed (<sup>1</sup> John 3 : 15).

**3. Again, rather, a second time.** The more the mind perceives of God's judgments, the more profound is the praise. **Smoke.** The figure is derived from chap. XVIII, the fall of Babylon destroyed by fire. The picture is that of a city utterly ruined, with the impossibility of being rebuilt, inasmuch as from its ruins arise eternally the smoke, the symbol of the smoldering fire. It is questionable whether there is a reference here to the eternal punishment of men, the lost spirits of disobedient men, the willing violators of God's moral laws. The design here is rather to point out the utter and final ruin of apostasy as such. It is just as if there were a real city whose smoldering ruins would not permit its reconstruction. Every immoral Babylon of every kind must be finally destroyed. Nowhere are we taught that sin will be completely abolished from the universe. We are taught that its organized opposition to God, whereby it causes corruption among men, its aggressive work, its encroachments upon God's kingdom, this will be crushed.

**4.** We have here a more detailed description of the song. **Elders.** We first met the elders in 4 : 4. Eleven times in the book thus far we have had glimpses of these who represent the

redeemed of the Old and New Testament times. They stand out as the symbolic representation of the saved. They do not differ essentially from the great multitude of 5 : 1. The song was that of the multitude saved from the oppression of the harlot, together with the voice of holy angels. The elders are not the people themselves so much as the symbolic representation of the entire host of the redeemed. They have a deep sympathy with God, rejoicing with him because he rejoices. They have a deep sympathy with men, rejoicing with them in that they are now delivered fully from their oppressions. We last saw the elders in 11 : 16, when they fell down to worship God at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. **Beasts,** rather, *living creatures.* It was one of the four living creatures who gave into the hands of the seven angels the bowls having the last plagues (15 : 1). It is fitting that they now rejoice when the opposition of God's enemies is overcome, when his judgments have done their work. Siding with God's holiness, they rejoice at the downfall of Babylon. The rejoicing host is made up of the living creatures, elders, holy angels, the saved host of men.

**5.** Two classes in heaven, the elders and the living creatures, have thus far praised God. **A voice . . . throne,** rather, *a voice came forth from the throne.* This indicates, not so much the origin of the voice, as the direction from which it comes. This voice has been attributed to the elders, to the living creatures, to Christ. It cannot be the voice of God himself, who sits on the throne. It cannot be the voice of Christ, for he could not join himself with men, as implied in the term *our.* On earth he said, "Your God, my

saying, <sup>k</sup> Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 <sup>l</sup> And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, <sup>m</sup> and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying,

Alleluia!—for <sup>n</sup> the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

7 <sup>o</sup> Let us be glad and rejoice,—and give honour to him:

For <sup>p</sup> the marriage of the Lamb is

from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants ye who fear him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah; because the Lord our God, the Almighty, has become king. Let us rejoice and exult, and we will give to him the glory; because the marriage of the Lamb is

<sup>k</sup> Ps. 103 : 20-22; 134 : 1; 135 : 1; 148 : 11-13.

<sup>l</sup> 14 : 2; Ezek. 43 : 2.

<sup>m</sup> 4 : 5.

<sup>n</sup> 11 : 15-18.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. 48 : 11; 97 : 1; Isa. 66 : 10, 14; Zech. 9 : 9.

<sup>p</sup> 21 : 2, 9; Isa. 54 : 5; Hosea 2 : 19; Matt. 22 : 2; Eph. 5 : 32.

God.” They stood in very different relationship toward God, so that he did not say, “Our God.” It is implied here that this voice, coming from the direction of the throne, has thereby the divine sanction. We are left, on account of the indefiniteness of the statement, in ignorance as to the origin of the voice. **Praise . . . God**, rather, *Give praise to our God all ye his servants, ye that fear him, small and great*. Every heart is summoned to praise God. (Comp. Ps. 134 : 1; 115 : 13.) God desires the praise of all. It is fitting that deliverance should create praise. A praiseless heart must be a thoughtless, a thankless, a godless heart. Jesus insisted on the public recognition of himself as worthy of praise (Luke 19 : 40).

6. An immediate response follows. A great chorus of praise, rising higher and higher, is heard at once. The sound rises from that of a great multitude, to the noise of the ocean’s roar, then to the sound of mighty **thunders**, rather, *thunders*. It is a majestic response, revealing the great interest manifested in the triumph of God’s enlarging kingdom. **Alleluia . . . reigneth**, rather, *Hallelujah; for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth*. God has always reigned in a glorious way, doing his will in heaven and among men (Dan. 4 : 35). But his patience has permitted assaults upon his kingdom, and his commands have been disobeyed. Satan and bad men have combined to resist his holy and revealed will, and make war upon him (Ps. 2). Sometimes, as the Bible shows, there has been a seeming defeat for God’s cause. Satan is called the god of this world (<sup>2</sup> Cor. 4 : 4); there have been

days of Satan’s seeming triumph (Luke 22 : 53). This verse contains the thankful acknowledgment that God’s sovereignty has been manifested and recognized in the recent events described. The tense of the verb here shows that, at a distinct time in the past, God asserted his sovereignty. God, at this time, gets no new attributes, but he reveals himself as the active, ruling God. The song here has a wider range than that mentioned in ver. 1, 2. That celebrated his victory over the harlot. This assumes that all his enemies have been put down, though this has not yet been shown in vision. It required an almighty king to overthrow Babylon. He has not only given his judgments upon his enemies, but he has entered upon his open and kingly reign. God has taken to himself that which rightly belongs to him. There is also a transition in God’s moral government from the time of probation, of passiveness on his part, in order that character may develop itself according to its own nature, to that of retribution, of award according to desert, of open assertion of his rights as king and Lord. When the harlot goes down, then it is seen that all the foes of Christ, in rapid succession, also go down.

7. The real church of Christ has long enough mourned, sometimes sitting clothed in sackcloth; a time of rejoicing has come, and this too, an everlasting rejoicing. These are the words of the heavenly chorus. **Let us . . . him**, rather, *Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him*. Hell has no thanksgiving days, heaven has all thanksgiving days. **Marriage of the Lamb has come**. The figure

come—and his wife hath made herself ready.

come, and his wife has prepared her-

of a marriage between the Lamb and his people pervades the entire Scriptures. (See Isa. 54:1-8; Ezek. 16:7; Hosea 9:19; Matt. 9:15; 22:2-14; 25:1-13; 2 Cor. 11:2; John 3:29; Eph. 5:25.) Marriage, in its essence, signifies oneness, completeness of identity, so that no longer are there two, but one. It signifies, when the marriage is real, joy, peace, increasing blessedness. It implies, in this case, a most intimate and personal relation between Jesus and his people, whereby affection, oneness in all glorious attributes, and protection are afforded. It is a relation that is entered upon at the time when the soul enters into a personal covenant with him. This is the betrothal to be consummated into a marriage when the Lord and the believer shall be brought face to face with each other. The joy will be an enlarging one, until there comes its completion at the personal appearing of Christ. It must be understood that in this passage the reference is not so much to the individual believer as to the assembled collection of believers. As there is one bridegroom, the glorified Lord, so in like manner there can be only one bride, the collective church of Christ. There will be a personal relation between each believer and the Lord, so that each one will receive according to the life on the earth. But the church, at large, as a whole will be received into a new life of glory, and enter upon a course of life larger than any heretofore experienced. As the marriage upon earth makes a separation from old ties and relationships, and involves new ties, relationships, and residence, in like manner, in a way transcending human thought and language, there will be a period of glory, honor, and blessedness for the entire body of believers, and the entire life of each believer. The tense employed here is in the past, signifying that this new life is already, once for all, entered upon. It is evident, however, that it is used in a prophetic sense, for something not yet secured. The marriage, in its proper sense, does not take place until many large events, spoken of in the succeeding chapters, are fulfilled. The marriage cannot take

place until all the enemies of Christ have been destroyed, until Satan has been bound, until the reign of blessedness has been entered upon, until the new heavens and the new earth have come into sight, until Christ comes in person. There can be no wedding until the glorified bridegroom appears from the heavens. The initial steps have been taken when the harlot has been destroyed. The succeeding events are made sure to the waiting church by the promise of Christ. Many things in the last stages of human affairs are regarded in widely different ways. Among the controverted points are, will Christ appear in person before or after the millennium? Will there be a personal reign of Christ on the earth? What is to be the nature of the millennium? In what way will the millennium be introduced? Will the Jews be converted before or during the millennium? Will the Jewish church assume a kind of leadership during this period? Will there be a rapture of the saints at the beginning of this blessed reign? Most of these questions will receive discussion in the Notes on the closing chapters. **Wife . . . ready.** A certain adornment is needful; a work of preparation is regarded as essential. There is a moral and spiritual development of character that is now complete. For marriage with such a Lord there must be a fine character represented by beautiful clothing. Among the Jews a long time intervened between the betrothal, which was in reality the initial step of the married life, and the wedding itself, when the bridegroom took the bride to himself. See the Bible Dictionaries for the full account of the preparations made for the consummated marriage. The spiritual bride has waited a long time for the manifestations of the Lord's ownership. For the first time in this book we read of the marriage, though there is a reference to a tender personal relationship between the Lord and the believer in 3:20. He will sup in the heart in the personal blessedness experienced. He will publicly own his people, and give them a share in all that he has. No one of the de-

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

9 And he saith unto me, Write, <sup>c</sup>blessed are they which are called unto the

8 self. And it was given her that she should clothe herself in fine linen, shining, pure; for the fine linen is the 9 righteous acts of the saints. And he says to me, Write, Happy are they who

<sup>a</sup> 3 : 4, 5, 18; Ps. 45 : 13, 14; Isa. 61 : 10.      <sup>r</sup> Ps. 132 : 9; Phil. 3 : 9.

<sup>s</sup> Matt. 22 : 2-4; Luke 14 : 15, 16.

parted saints has yet partaken of this marriage supper. This blessedness is reserved until that time when all shall share in it together. Glorious things are spoken of and to the church.

8. This verse amplifies the preceding. **And . . . white**, rather, *And it was given unto her to array herself in fine linen, bright and pure*. We come now, in all probability, to the words of John given in explanation. *Given*. This refers to the divine element of the preparation. Through God's free grace provision has been made by which the bride may array herself in beautiful clothing. God's grace began the work, not working upon people in an irresistible way, but in such a manner that she may array herself. Heaven and the glorified life are for prepared people. As in Matt. 22 : 12, those not arrayed in the wedding garment have no part in the marriage feast. The clothing is splendid and spotless (7 : 15; Eph. 5 : 27). **Righteousness**, rather, *righteous acts*. This word is in the plural. Some take this term as meaning righteousness, the pardon and justification that Christ gives, the plural number here implying that each one will have his own righteousness. The better way is not to regard this term as meaning the completed act of justification which takes place once for all, at the beginning of the Christian life, but the righteous acts, the holy living, the beautiful character with which, through God's grace, the believer is clothed. Christ's grace received into the life, Christ's spirit received into the heart, the result is that a Christly life and conduct are developed. The person of the believer, and of the church at large, is not simply covered with forgiveness while the character is imperfect, but the character is one with Christ's, his holiness becomes theirs in a real way. John does not hesitate to say that the church will be presented before God

clothed in righteous acts. This is not a salvation on account of works, as all comes through God's grace. There is no salvation through works, but there is no salvation apart from works. The believer is saved for Christ's sake, and is also changed into his image. An imputed righteousness is worthless unless there be also an indwelling righteousness.

9. **He saith**. Many interpretations are given as to the personality of the one here speaking. Some identify him with the angel mentioned in 17 : 1; others with the one mentioned in 18 : 21. Both here and in 22 : 9 John is forbidden to worship him, inasmuch as he is a fellow-servant. In all probability the angel is to be identified with the one appearing in 1 : 1, 10, a real angel, not a symbolic being, whose province it is to interpret to John and suggest what is to be written. After the wedding comes the marriage supper. **Blessed . . . called**, rather, *Blessed are they who are bidden*. We are not to make two classes of persons, the one constituting the host of the saved, the Lamb's wife, the other part embracing those who are the guests. We must not draw any dividing line between the two. The same persons constitute both the bride and the guests. There is not between the two groups mentioned any division as though one were a more highly favored class than the other. There is a change in the imagery in order that the picture of the feast may be complete, inasmuch as there can be no feast without guests. Six times in this book we have a saying introduced by the word "Blessed" (1 : 3; 14 : 13; 20 : 6; 22 : 7, 14). **Bidden**. In the earthly life of Jesus all were invited to share in the benefits and blessings of Christ's salvation, all were invited to the supper (Matt. 22). Many rejected the offer, and would not come. Those who partook of the spiritual supper on the earth are those who, in

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

are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he says to me, These 10 are true words of God. And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he says to me, See thou do it not. I am a

t 21:5; 22:6.

u 22:8.

x 22:9; Acts 10:26; 14:14, 15; Col. 2:18.

this passage, are found worthy to partake of the supper that affords a foretaste of the heavenly life. **Marriage supper.** For the first time in this book we read of the marriage and the wedding supper. A marriage involves the personal presence of the bride and the bridegroom. In this part of the vision Jesus appears, in a very real way, and there ensues to the church a time of blessedness, joy, triumph, and rejoicing, such as it had never known before. The general idea of a supping with the Lord appears in 3:20. We have many allusions in the Scriptures to a wedlock between the individual believer and the congregation of the Lord's people and the Lord himself (Ps. 45:9-15; Isa. 54:5; Hosea 2:19; Matt. 22:2; Eph. 5:32). John the Baptist speaks of Jesus as the bridegroom and of the wedding (John 3:28, 29). The supper does not refer to the joy of the individual believer, but applies to the joy of the collective people of Christ. It is the great host of Christ's people that makes up the bride clothed in white. The supper does not refer to the heavenly life as such, for that is not introduced until the following chapters. At the supper will be music, joy, and peace; the social fellowship, the sight of the face of the bridegroom. The days of mourning, of separation are past. From this time on the church will be clothed in festive garments, her days of rejoicing will continue. Her times of defeat and struggle, her times of persecution and shame are gone. It is such an era of blessedness and triumph for her that it is a foretaste of heaven itself. The Lord's Supper on the earth is a sign and a prophecy of this marriage supper. In this supper Jesus himself is the substance of the feast. In him and through him his people have all their life. Jesus and his people, both individually and collectively, are one. A wrong done to a believer is a wrong done to Christ (Acts 9:4). A wrong done to a believer is a sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12). At the

time of the vision there is such an open union between Christ and his people that the glory of Christ is manifested in the life of the church. The church is dressed in white, and is clothed in righteousness. It is, as it were, the public espousal of the church by the heavenly bridegroom. The blessedness is such that it can be compared to nothing but a marriage supper. The blessedness will keep on growing until the earthly life is merged into the heavenly life. **True sayings.** The events about to happen will abundantly attest their truth. This statement does not merely affirm that, in general, all God's words are true, nor in particular that these statements are true, but more than this, that their truth will be made gloriously plain and evident in the events about to happen. When one comes to the feast he will see how true it is that the guests there gathered are blessed.

**10. And . . . him,** rather, *And I fell down before his feet to worship him.* The splendor of his person, and the greatness and gloriousness of the teachings imparted, overwhelm the mind of John. Unconscious, perhaps, of what he was doing, feeling probably that something divine must be inherent in his person, he proffers such worship as ought to be rendered only to the really divine. Worship is instinctive to a thoughtful mind. Only a divine being can rightfully claim it. Paul refused to accept the worship of fellow-men (Acts 14:14); Jesus accepted the worship of men (John 20:28). Even an apostle may make a mistake in judgment. **Said,** rather, *said.* The same prohibition occurs in 22:9. No created being, however high, is entitled to the homage that belongs to God. He will not share his glory with another. Reverence is becoming before God, insomuch that angels cover their faces (Isa. 6:2). Moses removed his sandals when drawing near to the visible token of God's presence (Exod. 3:5). The three Hebrews would not bow before the

*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.*

*y 1 : 9; 1 John 5 : 10.*

*z Exod. 34 : 14; Isa. 42 : 8; Matt. 4 : 10; Phil. 2 : 10.*

*a John 5 : 39.*

fellow-servant of thee and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

image made by Nebuchadnezzar (*Dan. 3 : 18*). The prostrations before a superior or a benefactor, especially common to the Orientals, are not forbidden by this passage. The uncovering of the head in the presence of another, or in the presence of the constituted authorities, is not forbidden. The angels are high in position, but they are, in common with the saints, servants of God. Some have misinterpreted the passage to mean, "I am a fellow-servant of thine, and a brother, hence inferring that the angel is a departed spirit from the earth." The connection makes it clear that this cannot be the meaning. *I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren. Have, rather, hold. Testimony of Jesus.* This means a testimony for and concerning Jesus. The one supreme effort of angels and saints is to bring men to Jesus, to give right views of Jesus, to think in a fitting manner of Jesus. Hence the angels rejoice when men accept Jesus, and experience a spiritual change in the life (*Luke 15*). God alone is the fitting object of worship. Jesus is worshiped because he is God manifest to us in human form (*1 Tim. 3 : 16*). In heaven they make no separation between worship rendered to the Father and that given to the Lamb (*5 : 13*). **For . . . prophecy.** The angel desires to show that all the servants of God—prophets, angels, saints—are brothers, in order to justify his use of the term, *brethren*. The prophets of the Old Testament had the Spirit of Christ (*1 Peter 1 : 11*) in foretelling the sufferings and glories of the Saviour; the angels are moved by the love of Christ, as they behold his work in honoring God's law and saving men; the saints, including John, constituting the bride of the Lamb, have him as the source of their life and the crown of their glory. All have drunk of one and the same spirit. Prophecy is used here in a large sense, not meaning prediction alone, which is but a small part of prophecy, but includes all inspired

utterance in all ways. The testimony for Jesus, common alike to all classes of the followers of Christ, is the one common spirit of prophecy. The witness for Christ, by all the parties here mentioned, has the one common characteristic that it is prophetic. Inasmuch as they all are brothers by virtue of a common relation to Christ, it is not fitting that one should worship another, but that all alike should worship God. This justifies the use of the term **for**. We are brothers because of a like relation to God, and a common witnessing for Jesus, and a common teaching concerning him. It is plainly taught here that we need no angel mediators to stand between us and God. It is a prime heresy of the Romish church that it places angels between the Saviour and penitent men. If saints are not yet equal to angels (*Luke 20 : 36*), it is true that all are so near to God that no angel can bring the believer nearer.

**SECTION IX. XIX : 11–XXII. THE END.** We are now approaching the consummation, the end of all human affairs. There is no trace in the Scriptures of the annihilation either of the earth or of men. But there are frequent allusions in the teachings of Jesus and the inspired writers, to an approaching end of the present order of things. Jesus speaks of a regeneration, when there shall be for society, as for a person, a regeneration, a complete reconstruction of affairs (*Matt. 19 : 28*). Peter speaks of a restoration to a former state of things (*Acts 3 : 21*). He speaks also of a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell, preceded by a reconstruction of the physical world (*2 Peter 3 : 13*). Paul speaks of the entire creation sharing in the blessed results of Christ's redeeming work (*Rom. 8 : 21*). There has been a long past for the physical life of the world, involving, perhaps, millions of years. There has been a past in the history of the human race reaching

back to thousands of years, far longer than is indicated by the chronology of Archbishop Usher. As there was a beginning to the physical universe and to the human race, so also there will be an ending to both in their present order of existence. There came a partial beginning to the race at the deluge. There came a new moral era when Jesus Christ came into the world. There comes a new era when Jesus shall again come in power to introduce for his people an age of blessedness, for his enemies an era of judgment. We come, in the closing part of this chapter, and in the following chapters, to the consummation of the work of Jesus. His work was planned in heaven, in the ages before the human race began to be (<sup>13:8</sup>). His work was foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures (*Luke 24:44*). His birth, his death, resurrection, and ascension are mentioned in the New Testament as essential facts, also the seemingly small results of his ministry in getting disciples. We have here, at the end of centuries of his work, the closing of his mediatorial function. We come to the breaking down of all opposition. The great monsters of opposition of all kinds, political powers, false systems of faith, corrupt religious organizations, Satan himself, all these will be put down finally and completely. The great facts of judgment, the manifestation of God's almighty power and holiness are brought into view. The resurrection of the dead, the banishment of death for the righteous, meets us as a blessed experience. The triumph of evil, the hideous wars, the disorders that for centuries filled the earth, these all disappear from sight. The church puts on beautiful garments so that by her new spiritual endowments she transforms the world and shares in the glory of her Lord. The physical world itself will share in the glorious results that come from the mediatorial work of Jesus. Heaven will open before the eyes of the redeemed, and the lake of fire will receive the foes of Christ. The cause of Christ is seen, at the end, to be not a failure, but a triumphant and conquering kingdom. The crowns rest, not upon the beasts, but upon Christ. The closing part of this book is a sublime poem, presenting in a

symbolic way the most glorious scenes for the believer and the church. The symbols, in this part of the book, present in the most impressive way the complete triumph of the Redeemer. The book itself would be a disappointment were it not for the closing part. We have seen the ravages of Satan, the persecutions of the beast, the corruptions wrought by the unclean woman, the seductions of the false prophet, the oppression of the godly. If the book closed with these, the question would arise, Did Christ die in vain? Has he a kingdom that prevails? Is God the almighty and holy one? These questions are all answered in this closing section. It is undoubtedly the greatest symbolic representation brought before the eyes of men. The ruin wrought by sin is now undone by the vision of a new earth; a bitter and unceasing warfare on the part of Satan now comes to a close by the banishment of the arch foe. The suffering and patient Christ is transformed into the acknowledged and conquering Christ, the King of kings. The believer, after living so long clothed in sackcloth, is now a guest at the wedding supper, in close fellowship with the glorified Redeemer. What takes place in symbol, in a moment of time, may require centuries to accomplish in the actual fulfilment on the earth. Great moral changes are contained in a single paragraph. One symbolic event may involve changes that will work a complete revolution in human society. We are moving, in these closing scenes, in the midst of mighty changes, the winding up of the present dispensation and the ushering in of a new, complete, and eternal state, both for the righteous and the unrighteous. We see a triumphant Christ, a glorified church, a renovated society, a transfigured earth, the doom of Satan, the banishment of ignorance, corruption, and oppression from the church. The agencies by which these changes take place are the heavy weight of judgments, the presence of Christ, the power of the truth as borne witness to by the church, the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

**11-21. THE CONQUERING CHRIST DESTROYS THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET.** We have had the destruc-

*The triumph of "The Word of God" and his followers over the beast and the false prophet.*

11    b AND I saw heaven opened, and behold <sup>a</sup> a white horse; <sup>d</sup> and he that sat upon him was called <sup>c</sup> Faithful and True; and <sup>f</sup> in righteousness he doth

b 4 : 1; 15 : 5.

c 6 : 2.

d Hab. 3 : 3-15.

e 1 : 5; 3 : 7, 14.

f Ps. 45 : 3-7; Isa. 11 : 4; 59 : 17; 63 : 1-6.

tion of the corrupt woman, the ungodly Babylon, in the preceding chapter. Judgment now comes upon the other foes of Christ. We have here portrayed the downfall of the beast (13 : 1), and the second beast, here denominated the false prophet (13 : 11). They are destroyed in a symbolic way by the Saviour. A great slaughter, in symbol, follows, such as we might expect in a terrible Oriental conflict. It is not a war, a long-continued struggle, but as seen here in picture, the Almighty finishes his work in a moment. We are not to think, however, in the actual progress of Christ's cause on the earth, that great moral changes take place in an instant of time. As seen here the great political powers of the earth, and the allied powers that deceive men by pretended miracles, are both destroyed. These two, never separated in their work, are both destroyed together. After their destruction comes, in the next chapter, the destruction of Satan himself, the evil one back of all evil agencies. It may be well to notice, in the interpretation of these predictive symbols, that we cannot always indicate a certain definite order of events so that we can tell what is first and what is second in order of time. In the destruction of the image in Daniel (chap. ii), the stone destroys the feet of the image first, and then gradually crushes the remaining parts until all is destroyed. But in order of time this takes place in the reverse order, the head first, the feet last. We may not know in detail the order of events; we cannot construct a diary of the changes that will ensue; but we may be assured of this, that in time all the agencies opposed to Christ will be utterly destroyed, and Christ will win his way as a great and conquering power among men.

11. **Heaven**, rather, *the heaven*. In ver. 1 John hears voices from heaven,

11    And I saw heaven opened, and lo, a white horse, and he who sat on him, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he judges, and makes war.

the heaven of the vision. He hears, but he has no glimpse into it. Here it is opened. In 4 : 1, where we get the first sight of the conquering Christ, the door is opened into heaven. **White horse.** The horse stands for conquest, for war. Centuries have passed away, thousands of years perhaps, great empires have been concerned in helping or hindering Christ, vast stretches of territory have been covered, but through all these ages and these agencies, God's plan has been that Jesus should be the world's Lord as well as its Redeemer. He comes now to send judgments on his foes, and to introduce the church into a transfigured state, to change her justification into a glorification. **And . . . True**, rather, *he that sat thereon, called Faithful and True*. Some MSS. omit the word **called**. In the vision in 6 : 2 the rider is nameless. He is here defined in two respects, both relating to the moral character, **Faithful, True**. Jesus is the faithful one in respect to his promises. He is supremely faithful to the Father, to his own mission, and to his people. His words may be relied on more assuredly than the laws of nature (Mark 13 : 31). **True** is opposed not simply to the false, but mainly to the unreal and shadowy. Jesus is himself the truth, and therefore he is true. The glory of Jesus, as displayed here, is not in the greatness of his power, but in the fitness of his character, his faithfulness, his trueness. **War.** His cause is supremely holy. He wars in behalf of righteousness and through righteous agencies. What he opposes is the anti-christian element in the world. The Holy Spirit and holy men are his instruments of warfare. He passes judgment on all things, because he is all holy and all knowing. To **judge**, as here used, means to bring penalty upon wrong-doing. What before had deserved punishment, but had been passed

12 judge and make war. <sup>s</sup>His eyes were as a flame of fire, <sup>b</sup>and on his head were many crowns; <sup>i</sup>and he had a name written, that no man knew, but 13 be himself. <sup>x</sup>And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and

*g* 1 : 14; 2 : 18.

*h* Matt. 28 : 18; Phil. 2 : 11.

*i* 2 : 17; Gen. 32 : 29.

*k* Isa. 63 : 2, 3.

12 And his eyes are as a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he had a name written, which no one 13 knows but he himself. And he is clothed with a garment dipped in

over in God's forbearance, now receives the deserved penalty. The coming of Christ is not personal, as the one at Bethlehem, and as will be his final appearing (*Acts 1 : 11*). Nor is this the end of all things, as spoken of in Matt. 25 : 31; 1 Cor. 15 : 23. To regard this as a definite statement of a personal appearance of Jesus, is to mistake the symbolism of the book. This is not a history, but a vision. There has always been the carrying on of a war, on the part of Christ. The reference here is to an intensive effort, the result of which is to overwhelm his enemies.

**12. His eyes . . . fire**, rather, *And his eyes were as a flame of fire*. These words are a reminiscence of 1 : 14. The soul shines through the eye. Here there is the penetrating look, the flashing energy, an enkindled wrath against the enemy. It is this aspect that he presents, not to his people, but to his foes. Jesus can utter the "Come unto me" of Matt. 11 : 28, and the repeated woes of Matt. 23. Tenderness and severity are inextricably and happily blended in his nature. **Many crowns**, rather, *diadems*. The word rendered *crown* signifies victory; the *diadem* means royalty. Jesus has won a victory because he is a king. The *many* signifies the wideness of his reign—*King of kings*. Each king conquered, each new triumph on the earth, adds a new luster to his person and his power. While here Jesus had no place where he might lay his head; now he is the possessor of a universal dominion. The dragon had seven diadems (12 : 3); the beast had ten diadems (13 : 1). These were usurpers, having a real dominion for a time. Jesus is that one whose right it is to reign (*Ezek. 21 : 27*). Jesus will be the ruler over the kingdoms on the earth and over the powers on high (*Phil. 2 : 10*). **Had**, rather, *hath*. **Knew**, rather, *knoweth*. **No man**, rather, *no one*. The name stands for the nature itself; to know what the name is to

know the innermost nature. A change of condition or nature involves a change of name. In this manner Abram became Abraham; Sarai became Sarah; Jacob became Israel. As God became known more and more, as he revealed himself more graciously, he was known under different titles. Known first as the Almighty God, he was revealed afterward under the name of Jehovah (*Exod. 6 : 3*). We had Christ revealed in ver. 11 as Faithful and True; in ver. 13 he was the Word of God; in ver. 26 as King of kings. It is probable that the name was written on the forehead. (*Comp. s : 12*.) What is meant by this symbol is that in the ages to come there will be such a revelation of the nature and glory of Christ's person, and the glory of his mission and the blessedness of his relation to his people, that it cannot be expressed in the present known words of the language; no name will explain it. Back of all that we know of Christ, of his person and work, there is yet much that remains unknown. Each age will have for itself a larger Christ, with a new and a larger name to reveal him to the believer.

**13. Clothed . . . blood**, rather, *arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood*. Some ancient MSS have *dipped* instead of *sprinkled*. The Greek words for *sprinkle* and *dip* are different in form, *bapto*, meaning to dip, *rantizo*, to sprinkle. There is no instance in the New Testament where these two terms are confounded; the acts are entirely distinct from each other. Whose blood is this? the blood of Jesus himself signifying the blood shed for the remission of sins (*Matt. 26 : 28*), or the blood of his enemies? It is evidently the latter. He appears here, not under the aspect of Redeemer, a Saviour from sin, but as a conqueror, triumphing over his enemies, as a judge condemning guilty men. The basis of the imagery will be found in Isa. 63 : 1-3. It is the blood, not of atonement, but of

- his name is called <sup>1</sup>The Word of God.
- 14 <sup>m</sup> 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
- blood; and his name is called, The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white, pure. And out of his mouth goes forth a sharp sword, that with it he may smite the nations; and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron; and he

<sup>l</sup> John 1:1. <sup>m</sup> 14:20; 2 Kings 6:17; Ps. 68:17; Jude 14. <sup>n</sup> 7:9; Matt. 28:3.  
<sup>o</sup> Ver. 21; 1:16; Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8. <sup>p</sup> 2:27; Ps. 2:9. <sup>q</sup> 14:17-20.

punishment. The people are trodden down in the wine-press of God's retribution. The beast and the harlot shed the blood of the godly (13:7; 17:6), the righteous Judge now sheds the blood of the ungodly. **The Word of God.** John alone in the New Testament applies this term to Jesus in his preexistent state (John 1:1). It was he through whom the worlds were made; it was he who reconciled the world to God by his death. A word reveals the thought; in like manner Jesus is that word by which God is revealed to us. He is the way to God for us; he is the way to us for God, so that through him God is made known to us. God becomes known in his judgments through Jesus Christ. God is partially made known to us in the physical and moral natures, he is completely known in Jesus Christ. The term may also indicate the manner in which Jesus breaks down opposition and wins his way in the world. It is through the spread of his gospel, the revealed will of God, that Jesus triumphs among men. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. In 14:7 the general announcement of the gospel immediately precedes the fall of Babylon, indicating thereby that the truth of God was the instrument by which the wicked city was overthrown.

**14. Armies... were in heaven,** rather, *are*. Some understand by this term the great hosts of angels, which in some way are helpers of Christ, and who attend him at his final coming (Matt. 25:31). But John is not here describing the final appearing of Jesus, or any personal coming at all, but a coming in great spiritual power. In 17:14 reference is made to a contest between the Lamb and his foes. In that contest the Lamb overcomes them

through his forces, who are his saved people on the earth. The armies here spoken of embrace the moral and spiritual forces of Christ upon the earth, all the agencies of the church. Jesus will win his victories in the earth through his people clothed with new power through the Holy Spirit. The **white horse** signifies victory. The robes of white signify both victory and purity. They are clad rather for a triumphal procession than for a sanguinary war. In the vision it does not appear that the armies come into a real struggle at all; the enemies are defeated by the Lord himself. Their garments remain white. God sometimes works directly upon men in judgment, as in the plagues, though even here he made use of natural laws. Usually God works upon men through other men, and through the power of the truth, through the moral laws that he has established.

**15. Out of his mouth . . . sword.** The same figure is employed in 1:16; 2:12. The promises, the warnings, the commands that proceed from his mouth are like swords, they seem to be almost self-executing. The sword of the Spirit convicts (Eph. 6:17); the threatenings of God bring down penalties at once, and overwhelm the foe. This is a symbol of the absolute power of God, that his words are like swords that crush all opposition. His expressed will reveals the standard of judging, and is itself a power that breaks down all opposition. His words for the penitent are so tender that he will not break the bruised reed (Matt. 12:20). To the impenitent his words are swords that divide asunder. The work of judging, God has given to the Son (John 5:22). **Rod of iron.** The idea of the shepherd is found in 2:27;

16 winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 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

treads the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And he has on his garment, 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 great voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of God;

r Ver. 12.

s 17 : 14; Dan. 2 : 47.

t Ver. 21.

u Isa. 18 : 6; 56 : 9; Jer. 7 : 33; Ezek. 39 : 17.

12 : 5. To his people Jesus is a tender shepherd guarding them from all harm (John 10 : 11); to his enemies he is a shepherd of destruction, beating down the enemies of his people with a club of iron. Opposition must be put down, for God is a ruler as well as a Father. The iron, in the vision, emphasizes the opposition that he meets with, and his resolute determination to put it down. Jesus will be a staff of love or of iron, according to character. (Comp. Ps. 2.) If men will submit to his sway, his staff of iron becomes one of guardianship. The judgments here indicated may involve physical calamities, plagues sent as in Egypt, and the thousandfold ways in which God may make life burdensome. If God be against us who can be for us? **Fierceness . . . God**, rather, *the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty*. The words expressive of the severity of the punishment are heaped up, the one on the other. The figure is that of the vintage, taken from Isa. 63 : 1-6. These words are concerning the actions of one who is all righteousness and love, not a cruel God, like a Moloch. It is not an arbitrary punishment or a delight in suffering, for God has implanted in the human heart the feeling of tenderness. It is the symbol of the necessary hatred of a supreme holiness toward persistent wickedness. The punishment is under the charge of one who is holy, therefore, it will not be unfitting or unnecessary. It is the punishment of one who is almighty, it will therefore be heavy.

**16.** This verse further enlarges on the character of the person of Christ, and the greatness of his triumph. Because he is the Word of God, the Faithful and True, having a nature too large to be communicated in any definite name, he will be a conqueror over all

his foes. The name here indicated is on his garment and on his thigh, where the sword would be bound (Ps. 45 : 3). The Lamb makes war, and overcomes in the completest way. (Comp. Ps. 72 : 11.) Oriental sovereigns are fond of claiming large powers and large domains, also a kinship with the gods. Here the claim is in accord with the strictest truth. At all times Jesus is entitled to the allegiance of all powers on the earth, but his claims have been resisted or ignored. Like Pharaoh, many resist God's manifested will. At the time indicated in the vision Jesus will be the recognized head of the organized governments among men.

**17.** This verse shows the wide destruction that the Lamb works among his enemies. **Angel . . . sun**. Nothing would be more striking in actual life than one standing in the sun, in the view of all nations, that no one could help seeing. In vision John announces a proclamation as distinct as though one were in the sun, speaking to all peoples. **Loud voice**. All nations hear. God announces beforehand the coming of the flood, the impending disaster here. No man can have any cloak for his sin and obduracy. Before God strikes, he warns. **Fowls**, rather, *birds*. These are the vultures and carrion birds that feed upon the dead. **Come . . . God**, rather, *Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God*. There has been noticed a wedding supper of the Lamb—great, splendid—to which all God's friends are invited. This picture is that of a great battlefield, when the contest is over, when victory has come to God's side, and an overwhelming and final defeat has come to the ungodly party. It is a ghastly sight in itself, but it pictures, in a striking way, the issue of the contest between

18 the great God ; \*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, <sup>both</sup> 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 <sup>\*against him</sup> that sat on the horse, and against his army.

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

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

*x* Ezek. 39 : 18, 20.

*y* 6 : 15; 13 : 16.

*z* 13 : 1; 16 : 16; 17 : 12-14.

*a* Ver. 11-14.

God and his foes. The Old Testament foundation for this picture is found in Ezek. 39 : 17-22. No persons are meant by the birds of this passage. Inasmuch as birds flock to the battlefield for their prey, in like manner John sees them come, in vision, to this symbolic battlefield. The world rejoices in its seeming strength, but God sees defeat staring it in the face. On the earth a snowstorm could overwhelm a Napoleon ; a blast from God's nostrils destroyed the hosts of Sennacherib (*2 Kings* 19 : 35); in like manner here there is a carnival for the birds of prey. It is always, in the end, ill for the wicked. In the first century God sent judgment on the chosen people in destroying the city and scattering the nation. This was a battlefield showing God's retributive power. In the same century he changed, through the Holy Spirit, the hearts of enemies, so that they became his friends, as at Pentecost. This was a battlefield revealing God's gracious power and mercy.

**18.** We have here a list of the defeated—kings, captains of thousands, mighty men, horses with their riders, freemen and slaves, high and low. All are involved in one common disaster. The term **flesh**, occurring in the plural in the Greek, is used five times, as if to emphasize the purely carnal character of the enemies of God. There is a wide contrast between this feast and that described in ver. 9. God makes a separation among men at the last (*Mal.* 3 : 18; *Matt.* 25 : 32). The friends of Jesus are the guests at the marriage supper, the enemies of the Lord are a feast for the birds. In this purely outward way, and for Oriental peoples who cared nothing for the wounded and helpless, this vision emphasizes

the defeat that awaits all organized evil influences among men. (Read *Ps.* 2.) We make a great mistake when we regard sins of the flesh as the greatest enemies of God. A spirit of selfishness, philosophical speculations that deny the reality of sin and the deity of Jesus, may work far wider and more disastrous results than sins of sensuality.

**19.** In this and the following verses we have a view of the one-sided contest. We have two foes, the beast and the allied kings joined together against the one who sits on the horse, the Lord Jesus. The beast is that of 13 : 1; 17 : 3. The **kings** are those in allegiance to it, the wicked powers of the earth symbolized by the ten kings of 17 : 12. The contest is that spoken of in 16 : 14, the contest at Armageddon. The **armies** and the **army** denote the forces at work against and for the Lamb. There has always been a war between God and the evil one since the opening days in Genesis (*Gen.* 3 : 15), but growing more intense toward the last. The attack here is made by the enemies of the Lamb; they make war upon him. There is, of course, no literal battle, but in figure is set forth the unmixed and undying hatred of the world toward God and his people. The victory of the Lamb is not won by his own direct interposition and unaided power, but through his army. It is by the church making use of the Spirit of truth and holiness, not by calling fire down from heaven, that the triumphs on the earth are won. It was by holy living, by earnest testimony, by steadfast endurance, by unselfish help to others, not by startling miracles or wonders in nature, that Christianity won its great triumphs in the first centuries, overthrowing heath-

20 <sup>b</sup> 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 <sup>c</sup> them that worshipped his image. <sup>d</sup> These both were cast alive into a lake of fire

20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, with which he led astray those who received the mark of the beast, and who worshiped his image. The two were cast alive into the lake of fire, that burns with

<sup>b</sup> 13 : 11-17; 16 : 13, 14; 1 Tim. 4 : 1.

<sup>c</sup> 13 : 12, 15

<sup>d</sup> 20 : 10, 14; Dan. 7 : 11.

enism in the Roman empire. There may be also physical convulsions and fearful troubles that will drive the ungodly from their accustomed sources of comfort, but in the main the Lamb will work through his church by spiritual agencies as alone effective to break down evils, and turn men from the love of unrighteousness to the love of the truth. Great calamities may startle and awaken, but the truth and the Holy Spirit alone can work a change in the heart. "In what form this prediction will fulfil itself cannot be conjectured. But it seems to point to a last struggle between society and the church, or rather between Christ and antichrist. Those who take note of the tendencies of modern civilization, will not find it impossible to conceive that a time may come when, throughout Christendom, the spirit of antichrist will, with the support of the State, make a final stand against a Christianity which is loyal to the person and teaching of Christ" (SWETE).

20. Of the four great enemies of the church, the first and second beasts of chap. XIII., XVII., the unclean woman of chap. XVII., and the great dragon of chap. XII., one has already been symbolically destroyed (17 : 16). Two are here destroyed, the beast and the false prophet; the remaining one will be destroyed in the next chapter. The beast is destroyed apparently without any struggle on his part, no mention is made of any fighting. They are consigned to the fate that they have brought upon themselves. The beast last appears in chap. XVII., in its highest and most antichristian form. The false prophet is, without doubt, the second beast of chap. XIII., working signs in the presence of the first beast. The worldly power and the worldly wisdom that had both been arrayed against God, are overthrown, disarmed entirely of their power.

They are, so far as their opposition is concerned, taken and destroyed. In Dan. 8 : 11 we see that one method of punishment was to cast alive into the fire. Here that representation is given as the fate of these foes. We are not to think of either of these as representing persons. All that takes place here is symbolical. It is as if two living beasts were cast into the fire. What John presents in this symbolic teaching is that these two great forces that opposed God are now, through the force of the truth, and the energy of the church, stripped of their power to hurt or hinder. It is true that all incorrigible sinners, whether represented by the first beast as a persecuting power, or by the false prophet as using its wisdom and its priesthood to seduce men from the truth, will be sent into eternal punishment. But the main thought here is that the great systems of persecution and false teaching will be as utterly destroyed as if two beasts, that stood for these forces, were cast into the burning lake. This passage shows that the two beasts are intimately associated; where one is found, the other also is found. For the mark of the beast, and the image of the beast, see 13 : 14, 16. **These both, rather, they twain.** **Lake of fire.** In this is represented the second death of 2 : 11; 20 : 14; 21 : 8. It is the hell or gehenna of Matt. 5 : 22. It is a place of punishment and, as we are elsewhere taught, it is everlasting in its nature. It does not end in extinction of being. The vision is a pictorial presentation of this teaching; the open foes of God will be severely punished, as though in a lake of fire. Governments and false systems of religion, as such, cannot be punished, for they have no personal existence. There is no real beast to be punished, but there are real beastlike persons who will be dealt with in this manner. The human enemies of God are not cast into this

21 <sup>a</sup>burning with brimstone. And the remnant <sup>b</sup>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.

*e* 14 : 10; 21 : 8.

*f* Ver. 15; 2 Thess. 2 : 8.

*g* Ver. 17, 18; 1 Sam. 17 : 46.

place in the vision until after the judgment scene in chap. XX. **Brimstone.** We are not forced to accept all the descriptions of the future blessedness and misery in a literal way. It is possible for us to understand the nature of the future scenes only under the terms of this life. Under all the varying descriptions of the punishment of the ungodly, there remains this solemn teaching, that there is a place of penalty, retributive in its nature, unending in its duration. There will be a body in the future existence. Jesus speaks of a punishment for the body (Matt. 10 : 28). But we may not emphasize unduly the physical aspects of the unseen existence. The chief delights and penalties will be spiritual in their nature. It is not stated by whom the two beasts were taken, though it is reasonable to refer the act to the army of the all-conquering King.

**21. And the remnant, rather, and the rest.** The allusion is to the confederates and followers of the two beasts. **With the sword.** In the vision none of the followers of the Lamb have occasion to take part in the struggle. The victory is plainly wrought by spiritual means, so that we need not interpret this of any armies to be overthrown, or any actual military confederacy. It is probable that the confederations and alliances of the last days will not be outward organizations, but a junction of intellectual and spiritual forces. In one indiscriminate mass the armies are overthrown. In ver. 18 we have the parts of the armies specified. The slaughter was so great that the birds of prey were glutted with their feast. As noticed in ver. 17, we may not find specific allusion to any persons or parties under the term, **birds.** It is fanciful to attempt to find any specific reference. The birds are spoken of simply to fill out the scene, to add to its naturalness, to show the greatness

21 brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword of him who sat on the horse, which came forth out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

of the slaughter. The vision has thus far revealed to us the destruction of the harlot, the first beast, the false prophet. God's cause marches on steadily and triumphantly. It has required centuries to bring about this result, to show the weakness and the wickedness of sin, the greatness of the person, the power, and the mission of Jesus. It is pleasing, as we draw near the end, to see the person of Jesus stand out alone in its grandeur.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Great mercies demand great praise. Each new revelation of God's power and holiness calls forth fresh outbursts of praise (Ps. 107). No Christian should have dumb lips (ver. 1).

2. God is holy, and therefore he is a judge. He is strong, and therefore he inflicts heavy penalties. He is patient, and therefore he waits. He loves his people, and therefore he makes their cause his own. God's moral nature will shine out like the sun, that all may see the rightness of his dealings (ver. 2).

3. As long as men are holy, so long heaven will continue. As long as men are unholy, so long must hell continue. Future blessedness and misery are not unreasonable when one remembers that God has joined together holiness and happiness, unholiness and unhappiness. Heaven and hell are not accidents in a moral universe. They spring out of a moral necessity (ver. 3).

4. The redeemed may well rejoice when God triumphs, when temptations and trials are taken out of the way. It is not the gratification of a personal revenge, but the sharing in God's rejoicing when all his enemies are put down and his name is glorified (ver. 4).

5. There are gradations among the servants of God, but all are insignificant when compared with him. The highest angel and the weakest believer must do

their best; this God requires. Nothing less than this will satisfy him, or ought to satisfy his people (ver. 5).

6. The disorders in life, the temporary triumphs of wrong seem to reveal a God who does not care or cannot control affairs. In time he will be seen to be the Lord of all. It is the highest wisdom to be governed by such a being (ver. 6).

7. There is a growing blessedness for the Christian. It is blessed to live for Christ, it is blessed to depart and be with Christ (Phil. 1:21). It is blessed when the assembled people of God shall be brought into a full fellowship with their Lord (ver. 7).

8. Holiness of heart marks those who dwell where God is. The holiness in the believer is of the same quality as the holiness of God, for he is a child of God. The holiness in the heart is not native there, but is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In heaven the holiness is all-controlling (ver. 8).

9. Words are too weak to express the blessedness of the life with Christ. There is a blessedness now, in the midst of obloquy and poverty, if Christ dwells in the heart. The blessedness there is in union with a glorified body, a glorified mind and moral nature, a glorified Christ, and a glorified society (ver. 9).

10. The worship of God is fitting and necessary. We may respect good men, love the church and its ordinances, but we must reserve acts of worship for God alone. We should pray to no one lower than God (ver. 10).

11. Jesus is a faithful and true Saviour. Satan is a liar, the world may prove deceptive, but Jesus can be leaned on. His word is a rod and staff. His people should imitate him in faithfulness (ver. 11).

12. Jesus had once a crown of thorns, he now has many crowns. He is worthy of them. The angels adore him, nature obeys him, men should give him their love and worship (ver. 12).

13. Jesus, as a Saviour, shed his blood for men. Jesus, as a judge, sheds the blood of the guilty. These two sides of the work of Jesus must not be forgotten (ver. 13).

14. The church of Christ is not simply a rejoicing and saved host, it is to be an

army. Its duty and privilege is to help Jesus conquer the world, to put down all its iniquities. Each Christian is to be a soldier. Jesus is the captain of our salvation (ver. 14; Heb. 2:10).

15. Jesus has a shepherd's crook, a strong arm, a watchful eye, a tender heart for his sheep. He has an iron staff, a sharp sword, and fearful punishments for his foes. Those who trust him as Saviour will find in him a loving shepherd (John 10). The ungodly will share in his iron staff (ver. 15).

16. It is the purpose of God that Jesus shall be a universal sovereign. Jesus waits until his enemies are under his feet (Heb. 10:13). Each new penitent adds to the power and extent of his kingdom. He will be King of kings, whether we accept him or not (ver. 16).

17. Heaven and hell are far apart in their nature. They are far apart because godliness is very far from ungodliness. Each one must find a dwelling-place in the future. Each one makes his own choice now in accepting or rejecting Christ (ver. 17).

18. The seeming triumphs of the wicked will end in crushing defeats. It cannot be otherwise, for God has all power and all ages in which to work. God is now so patient that his patience obscures, for many, his power, his holiness, his warnings (ver. 18).

19. It is unreasonable to make war upon Christ. Neutrality is an act of unfriendliness and disloyalty. The peril to us is, not the intellectual rejection of Christ, but the ignoring of Christ and his claims (ver. 19).

20. Men have jails for the wicked, God also has a jail for the finally impenitent. The punishment will arise from a troubled conscience, also from outward penalty. The punishment does not destroy conscience or personal existence. Life goes on, a living death (ver. 20, 21).

## CHAPTER XX.

THE VICTORY OVER SATAN AND THE COMPLETED TRIUMPH. This chapter is intimately connected with the preceding. We are now rapidly approaching the consummation of all things, and the consequent triumph of

*Satan bound; the first resurrection, and millennial kingdom.*

**20** AND I saw an angel come down from heaven, <sup>b</sup> having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold on <sup>k</sup> the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand

**20** AND I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand

*a 1 : 18; 9 : 1, 2; Luke 8 : 31.      b Gen. 3 : 15; Isa. 27 : 1; John 12 : 31; Rom. 16 : 20; Heb. 2 : 14.*

*k 9 : 11; 12 : 9; 2 Peter 2 : 4; Jude 6.*

the cause of Christ. Satan has ravaged the world for centuries, inciting to persecutions, tempting God's people, and perverting the doctrines of the gospel. His sway has been so widespread that he is called the god of this world (*2 Cor. 4 : 4*). Above all opposition this work has revealed God alone upon his throne, observing the failure of all plans formed against him (*Ps. 2*), holy and almighty. Under his strokes of judgment we have seen the foes of God going down one by one, the first and second beasts, the false prophet, Babylon the apostate church—all of these, in vision, have been destroyed. Back of all these hostile forces has been the personal agency of Satan. This work would not be complete if we were to have the visions come to a close, and he be undestroyed. In this chapter we have the limitations of his power, the comparative annihilation, not of his person, but of his effective work against the cause of Christ. The breaking down of evil is of necessity the building up of the good. We have, therefore, now in vision the destruction of Satan's power, and the consequent ushering in of a brighter era, the millennium.

**1-3. THE BINDING OF THE DRAGON.** The entire book, beginning with *12 : 1*, should now be read. At that point the dragon is introduced, warring against Christ and his cause. The character of God, the redemptive work of Christ, the triumph of the Christian cause, all require that, in symbol, we shall see Satan himself removed as an obstructive force.

**1. And I saw.** Beginning with *19 : 11* we have seven visions, each introduced by the expression, "and I saw," *19 : 11, 17, 19; 20 : 1, 4, 11; 21 : 1*. **Angel.** In *19 : 11* we have a sight of the conquering Redeemer himself; in *19 : 17* we have an angel summoning

the birds to a feast, feeding upon the corpses of God's foes. This is a second angel **from heaven**, rather, *out of heaven*. This indicates the divine approval; none but one so commissioned of God could perform so mighty a task. **Bottomless pit**, rather, *abyss*. This is looked upon as Satan's abode, and hence entered by a door. This word is used elsewhere, in *9 : 1, 2; 11 : 7; 17 : 18*. **Key.** This is spoken of in *in : 18* as deposited in the hands of Jesus, who has all power. In *9 : 2* the pit is opened by an angel, here the pit is represented as closed. **Great chain.** This hangs over the open hands, dropping down on both sides. It is great because of the power needed to restrain so mighty a foe. The three physical terms used, *abyss*, *chain*, *key*, are figurative terms of agencies to be employed to limit, restrain, confine so great a spiritual being, limiting just as if a ringleader of wickedness were shut up in jail. A Samson may be restrained by physical chains, a Satan must be restrained by spiritual agencies.

**2, 3. Five distinct statements** are mentioned concerning the angel, **laid hold on the dragon, bound, cast, shut him up**, rather, *shut it. Set a seal upon him*, rather, *sealed it over him*. The **dragon** has been met with in *12 : 3, 9; 13 : 2, 4; 16 : 13*. He is the summing up, the embodiment of all the enemies of Christ, giving power to the faint heart, worshiped by the ungodly. Three other names are given him. **Serpent**, the bewitching, crafty foe, through the centuries deceiving men; **devil**, meaning slanderer, misrepresenting God and his cause to men; **Satan**, meaning the adversary, the chief opponent of God, of Jesus, of good things, of good men. The binding, the casting into the pit, the sealing, would be exceedingly

3 years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, <sup>m</sup>that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled:

*t* Dan. 6 : 17; Matt. 27 : 66.

3 years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should lead the nations astray no more, until the thousand years should be

*m* Ver. 8; 16 : 14, 16.

dramatic, as seen in vision, and would be easy of comprehension by all. A being who is spirit will naturally not be subject to a merely mechanical treatment; what takes place in vision, in perfect naturalness, cannot actually occur in a physical way. As a finite being subject to limitation in time and space, he may be confined within a definite region, or restricted in power, just as if he were shut up. The reference is not so much to the person of Satan, as to the limiting of his influence against the kingdom of Christ. The Scriptures dwell not so much on his personal history, as on his method of working and his final subjection to Christ. Jesus speaks of Satan as fallen from heaven (Luke 10 : 18); a being cast out of his position of power (John 16 : 11). In 12 : 9 he is cast down from heaven to earth; in 2 Peter 2 : 4 Satan is said to be bound, awaiting the judgment of the last day. The death of Christ, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the past, have limited Satan's power; it is asserted here that his cause, as an organized system, will ultimately go down through the supremacy of Christ's cause. At times he has seemed to be all powerful; he controlled business (13 : 17). Now his power is limited and impaired. His imprisonment in vision is the declaration that his power and influence will be largely destroyed. Men will still have fleshly bodies and human hearts, but the life set apart for Christ, the increased power of the truth, the work of the Holy Spirit within, these will close the mind to the entrance and control of Satan. The recognition of God's authority, devotion to God's cause, fellowship with holy activities, love of the truth, if these were to prevail in the world, they would so limit his power it would be as if he were shut up, and could do nothing among men. With the limiting of his power will come naturally an enlarged effectiveness of good agencies. **Shut.** The door is closed and locked. **Set a seal.** Jesus was

under seal in the sepulcher of stone, he broke the seal of empire. Each word adds to the impressiveness of the teaching. The purpose of the binding and the character of Satan are revealed in **deceive**. His whole nature is that of deception; if he worked openly he would lose power among men. He deceived our first parents in Gen. 3 : 4; he tried to deceive Jesus. **Nations** has reference, not to uncultivated nations as distinct from the cultivated, but as elsewhere to the godless classes. In ver. 8 the same word occurs, alluding to those far from God, indicating this by their remoteness from the holy city. As we are moving in the range of symbols, we cannot understand this to be a complete suppression of Satan's power. In John 16 : 11 Jesus said: "The prince of this world has been judged." This did not imply a sudden, complete, and permanent cessation of his work among men, nor may we understand this vision to make that declaration. It may imply a complete cessation of demoniacal possession, so prevalent in the first century. It may also involve large accessions to the power of good, the investing of the church with power so that, comparatively speaking, it will be as if his power for evil were suppressed. Satan, during his temporary imprisonment, will retain his satanic character, and men will remain imperfect and temptable. **Thousand years.** This is the number ten multiplied by itself twice, implying a large and complete period. It stands not for a thousand literal years, nor for any definite time. So far as the number itself is concerned, it might be less than this period, it might equally represent untold ages. John is not giving a scheme of chronology, but affirming the completeness of Christ's triumph. We may not expect definite numbers and dates in a book of symbols. Satan had his hour of triumph (Luke 22 : 53). Jesus has triumph during this long period of years. *Cast, shut, sealed, declare in a*

\* 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 thou-

finished; after these he must be loosed a little time.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them; and the souls of those that had been beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus, and on account of the word of God, and whoever did not worship the beast, nor his image, and did not receive the mark on their forehead, and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thou-

n Ver. 7-10; 12:12. o Dan. 7:9, 18, 22, 27; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30. p Ps. 149:9; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.  
g 6:9. r 13:12. s 5:9, 10; Dan. 2:44; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12.

forcible way the removal of Satan from the seat of his activities, the impossibility of his working as even he did. He is, as it were, a Napoleon on St. Helena, having the same malignity, but stripped of his power to seduce and lead men astray. During a great revival Satan has almost no power in a community; his power remains, but he finds no opportunity for plying his trade. If a revival were world-wide and ages long, it would be as if Satan were shut up in the abyss. During the millennial period, when righteousness shall reign in the world, and Jesus will be crowned King of the earth, the hearts of men will still maintain their sinful bias, and the reign of goodness will, in time, come to an end. This symbolic picture of the binding of Satan has been misapprehended by supposing it to imply the cessation of all evil among men. It is too readily assumed that if Satan be shut up and sealed in the abyss, the angels of Satan and wicked men can have no more place in the world. The final defeat of Satan does not come until ver. 10. **Loosed** has reference to a brief after-period, preceding the close of human history, when wickedness will be the controlling power. This is shown by the vision of the unloosing of Satan. The **must** does not affirm any moral necessity for this, but means the ordering of events in God's providence whereby men have a final exhibition of what wickedness can do—the contrast between Christ's reign and Satan's reign. **Little season.** The same expression is found in 6:11, a period that has stretched over many centuries. These two expressions, a thousand years and a little season, standing side by side, show how complete will be

Christ's triumph, how utter the defeat of Satan. This is all that they are meant to convey.

**4-6. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST.** Here is given a description of the manner of life upon the earth during that period when Satan is bound and Christ reigns.

**4. Thrones.** The predominant thought here is not that of reigning, but of rejoicing; thrones are for kings. Those who rejoice are those who laid down their lives for Christ's sake, those having the martyr spirit. In God's sight equally worthy of praise with the martyrs are those who were faithful in life, who lived lives of piety when such living meant ostracism and loss of business (John 9:22). Those who were despised on earth will now be found sitting on thrones (3:21). **Judgment.** This is usually interpreted to mean that they sit in judgment with Christ, judging during the thousand years. But the word rendered judgment does not mean the act of judging, but the results of judgment. The natural meaning is that to them is given the assurance of acquittal, of acceptance, so that they would themselves come under no judgment. John saw souls; we are reminded by this term of 6:9, where was a vision of disembodied spirits, not having had any resurrection. In that place they cried to God, imploring the divine vengeance, here they are regarded as avenged and rejoicing. There was a time when God's people were persecuted, now in symbol they have triumphed. **Lived and reigned.** During their lifetime they were regarded as the offscouring of the world. During all this period the spirit of the martyrs lived and reigned, controlling

5 sand years. 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.

*t Luke 14:14; 20:36; 1 Thess. 4:16.*

*y 1:6; 5:10; Isa. 61:6; 1 Peter 2:9.*

5 sand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Happy and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

*u 14:13; Dan. 12:12.*

*x 2:11; 21:8.*

*z Ver. 4.*

affairs among men. It is not of them risen and glorified that he speaks, but of their souls; these were regarded as living and reigning during this blessed period. The ideas they died for now were in the ascendancy, molding the business, the social spirit, the policies of the age. It was just as if the olden martyrs and godly men were actually living and leading the age in a holy way. Christ reigned, and they reigned, with, in, and through him.

5. This verse, in another form, expresses the same teaching, the triumph of goodness and good men. **Rest of the dead.** This is the opposite of the martyrs and those who served Christ, meaning the ungodly. During the millennial period the ungodly men had no controlling power, the faithful were those who led affairs. At the end of this period the ungodly have again the controlling power. It is now as if all the wicked dead rose from their graves and lived over again. **First resurrection.** The living and reigning with Christ is the first resurrection. This resurrection is to be understood as a part of a series of great symbolic pictures. Nothing is said of a rising from the dust of the earth, or a resuscitation of mortal bodies. The term resurrection is no more to be pressed into a literal significance than the words thrones, books, and lake of fire; but it is shown to be a living and reigning with Christ. Alford insists that this passage requires us to understand a literal resurrection, but the whole trend of the passage is against this. Swete's view is similar to this here given. "The Seer of the Apocalypse does not anticipate history; he is content to emphasize and express in apocalyptic language principles which guide the Divine government of the world.

That the age of the martyrs, however long it might last, would be followed by a longer period of Christian supremacy, during which the faith for which the martyrs died would live and reign, is the essential teaching of the present vision. When, under what circumstances, or by what means, this happy result would be attained, St. John does not see, and has not attempted to explain. It might have been well if students of this book had always followed this wise reserve" (SWETE).

6. Those who share in the first resurrection, who have the spirit of the martyrs and the faithful, are **holy**, and therefore **blessed**. The first resurrection and **second death** stand in contrast with each other. By this term is meant being cast into the lake of fire (ver. 14). The first death may be met in a joyful way by the Christian (1 Cor. 15:55); the second death hurts (2:11). Those not sharing in the first resurrection, having the spirit of ungodliness in them, are under the power of sin and death. The others are priests of God and of Christ (1:6; 5:10). No second resurrection is spoken of; if one is conceived of in the vision, it will be found in the living of "the rest of the dead," a resurrection of the ungodly spirit, so that a new era of wickedness begins on the earth.

**7-10. THE FINAL VICTORY OVER SATAN.** The millennial period is to end with the utter defeat of the old serpent, fulfilling the prediction of Gen. 3:15. To enhance the final and decisive character of the victory over Satan, John depicts him as loosed from his prison house for a season. The old enemy is then granted a second probation, in order to show that his nature is wholly that of deception.

*Satan loosed; his last battle and defeat; the final judgment.*

7 AND when the thousand years are expired, <sup>a</sup> Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out <sup>b</sup> to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, <sup>c</sup> Gog and <sup>d</sup> Magog, <sup>e</sup> to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. <sup>f</sup> And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and <sup>g</sup> the beloved city: <sup>h</sup> and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. <sup>i</sup> And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and

7 And when the thousand years are finished, Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and will go out to lead astray the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, 10 and devoured them. And the Devil who led them astray was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are

*a* Ver. 2.

*b* Ver. 3, 10.

*c* Ezek. 38, 39.

*d* Gen. 10 : 2, 5.

*e* 16 : 14.

*f* Isa. 8 : 8; Hab. 1 : 6.

*g* Ps. 78 : 63.

*h* Gen. 19; Ezek. 38 : 22.

*i* Ver. 8; Dan. 7 : 11.

**7. Loosed.** Nothing is said of the method of this release. The long reign of goodness and prosperity may have caused spiritual pride, a neglect of watchcare over the soul, a dependence upon an outward religion. Whether there was a sudden relapse into impiety, or whether it was the result of long periods of a moral and spiritual declension, we may not know. Spiritual forces usually work slowly and silently. At a certain period a vision presents a different spiritual condition in the world, occasioning Satan's release, and occasioned by it. This means renewed conflict, the awakening of latent sinful tendencies, and the manifestation of God's holy agencies.

**8, 9. Four quarters, or, corners.** The same expression is used in 7 : 1. Those most remote from religious centers are least influenced for good, and are most open to deception. By corners, John indicates those least devout, wherever situated. The further statement shows that all parts of the land were open to the temptations of Satan. This shows that the millennial era, with its world-wide triumph of piety, is not destined to eliminate all evil from every man, but that at the very last there will be found, in all quarters, those who can be deceived by Satan. John now turns to Ezekiel, and finds there (38 : 18-23) a similar prophetic picture, which is also an ideal scene. Gog was the prince of a country called Magog, lying, perhaps, north of the Caucasus. They gathered against God's people, and were utterly

destroyed. In vision something like that takes place at the end of this long period of the church's prosperity. To think here of actual nations lying in remote parts of the earth, is entirely foreign to the thought of the book. "In the rabbinical writings Gog and Magog appear as the enemies of the Messiah" (SWETE). **Breadth of the earth.** (Comp. Hab. 1 : 6.) **Camp.** The imagery is that of a fortified camp, rather than a moving army, as in 19 : 14, conforming to the ideal scene in Ezekiel. **Beloved city.** The reference is not to the actual city of Jerusalem, nor to the New Jerusalem which has not yet descended from heaven (21 : 23), but to God's cause on the earth. Jerusalem was the holy city, the symbol of God's dwelling-place, the prophecy of future blessedness (Ps. 15 : 1; 78 : 68). Nothing more worthy could be found to represent God's cause upon the earth. The two terms, camp and saints, reveal a preparedness on the part of God's people—shown subsequently to be unconquerable. **Fire.** Allusion is made to the event in Elijah's history (2 Kings 1 : 10, 12), already referred to in this vision (11 : 5).

**10. Devil.** He is everywhere portrayed as a person of vast power and malignity, at the head of the opposing kingdom. Cast down to the earth in 12 : 9, 13, he now is cast into a final and remediless perdition. Compare the words of Jesus, Matt. 25 : 41; also Ezek. 38 : 22. **Fire.** The punishment is described in terms of physical penalty. Even if the penalty were purely spiritual for a being with no

brimstone, <sup>j</sup> where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and <sup>k</sup> shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

- 11 And I saw <sup>l</sup>a great white throne, and him that sat on it, <sup>m</sup>from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; <sup>n</sup>and there was found no place for them. <sup>o</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; <sup>p</sup>and the books were opened: and another <sup>q</sup> book

also the beast and the false prophet; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

- 11 And I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and 12 no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. And books were opened; and another book was

*j* 19 : 20; Matt. 25 : 41.

*k* 14 : 9-11.

*l* Matt. 25 : 31.

*m* 6 : 14; 2 Peter 3 : 7, 10, 11; Ps. 18 : 7-15; 114 : 3-5.

*n* 16 : 20; Dan. 2 : 35.

*o* John 5 : 28, 29; Rom. 14 : 10-12; 2 Cor. 5 : 10.

*p* Dan. 7 : 10.

*q* 3 : 5; 13 : 8; Ps. 69 : 28.

physical nature, even then in vision it would be needful to represent the punishments as physical. All that is essential is that we hold to a fitting and unfailing judgment for Satan and his incorrigible followers. **Beast.** (Comp. 19 : 20.) **Tormented.** (See 14 : 10, 11.) Vindictiveness is not found in God, but there is a vindication of God's moral government. **Forever.** Nothing can more plainly indicate the endlessness of the punishment. Remaining a Satan forever, the penalty, by a moral necessity, goes on forever. If it be said that the beast and false prophet are not, in reality, persons, but only figuratively such, the answer is that all having the nature of the beast and false prophet are meant. These verses indicate the last great struggle of Satan and his forces to overcome the saints of God, and their utter defeat. The one great teaching is that, beyond the possibility of doubt, the organized forces of evil must ultimately perish. This is written for the comfort and assurance of the saints. The final victory may be far in the future, but it is assured.

**II-15. THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED.** The day of judgment and of the final consummation has come. Although the kings and their armies have been defeated, and the beast, the false prophet, and Satan himself, have been cast into the lake of fire, the apocalyptic scheme is not yet completed, we have the further vision of the judgment upon the wicked, and upon death itself. We have seen (ver. 6) the honor put upon the martyrs and those who kept their garments unspotted; in contrast we now have the judgment upon the ungodly.

11. John sees in vision a **throne**, significant of judgment. The **great** indicates the greatness of the person who acts as judge, and the wide-reaching results. The **white** affirms the holy character of the entire proceeding. **Him that sat** refers to God the Father, as in 4 : 2. Although the Father has given all judgment to the Son (John 5 : 22), yet all receive their judgment before the Father. There is only one throne, that of God and of the Lamb (22 : 1). **Fled away.** This is an enlargement of Ps. 114 : 3-7, and is designed to give an awful impression of the majesty of the judge. The earth and heaven are thought of as so terrified that they vanish utterly, they disappear from view. In 2 Peter 3 : 10-12 we have the declaration that the old physical nature of the world will give way to something higher and more glorious. Paul teaches the same in Rom. 8 : 22. There is no place in God's plans for the extinction of matter or soul.

12. **Dead.** Is the reference to all the dead or only to the wicked dead? John has used the word *dead* in ver. 5 as applicable to the ungodly dead alone. The expression **great and small**, is taken from 19 : 18, referring to the ungodly. In the entire passage there is no word indicative of blessedness to come to these dead. These do not sit upon thrones, but stand, like culprits, before the throne; there is no evidence that the names of any of these are found written in the book of life. **Books.** (Comp. Dan. 7 : 20.) In the Scriptures books are spoken of as registering human actions (Ps. 56 : 8; Mal. 3 : 16; Matt. 12 : 37). Hengstenberg declares that the *books* are those of guilt, condemnation, and death, and

was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, 13 according to their works. 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 15 death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

*r 2 : 23; Luke 12 : 47, 48; Rom. 2 : 6.*

*s Hosea 13 : 14.*

*t 1 Cor. 15 : 26, 54, 55.*

*u Ver. 6 ; 21 : 8.*

that a name cannot be written both in the books and in the book of life. There is no indication that the book of life is opened for judgment. The only purpose for which it is used is that referred to in ver. 15. For the **book of life** see Dan. 12 : 1; Luke 10 : 20; Phil. 4 : 13. It is implied that the dead do not have their names in the book of life, which contains only the names of those who are spiritually alive, having that life which is life indeed (*1 Tim. 6 : 19*). **Works.** (Comp. Rom. 2 : 6; 2 Cor. 5 : 10.) There will be gradations in punishment, as we might expect in the government of a wise and reasonable moral government.

13. All the ungodly dead are gathered together. **Sea** not being used in contrast with the land cannot, with certainty, be held to mean the ocean, where men have been drowned. It is often used symbolically to represent the troubled and evil world (*13 : 1; 21 : 1*). Associated as it is here with **death and hell**, rather, **hades**, both of them enemies of the saints, it may be regarded as one of the sources from which the ungodly come for judgment. In 6 : 8 death and hades form one of the judgments coming on the world; powers exercising sway over the wicked, and having the wicked only under their control. This is established by the fact stated in the next verse, that death and hades not only come to an end, but are sent into punishment together with Satan and the beast and false prophet. No mention is made here of the dust of the earth giving up its dead, for the thought expressed is not so much of a resurrection of bodies from their graves as the gathering together of all the ungodly dead in con-

opened, which is [the book] of life; and the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, 13 according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them; and they were judged every one according to their 14 works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the 15 second death, the lake of fire. And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

scious personality before the throne for judgment.

14. **Death . . . fire.** This is the apocalyptic equivalent of the statement in 1 Cor. 15 : 26. Compare also Isa. 25 : 8; Hosea 13 : 14. Death may be looked upon as a ruler of hades, the unseen world of departed spirits. These two terms are used, by a figure of speech, for those under their control. The one assured teaching is the final overthrow, in remediless ruin, of all who live and die as subjects of sin and death. **Second death, even the lake of fire.** The second death stands in contrast with the first resurrection, which brings largest blessedness to all sharing in it. The second death is the state of those who have chosen and confirmed to themselves the death which came upon men through sin. The New Testament term, death, involves far more than the violent wrenching apart of soul and body, involving the complete separation of the soul from its true life of blessing found in God alone (*Rom. 6 : 23*). Those who reject the salvation that comes through Christ, bring upon themselves a fearful second death. Those who come to the judgment scene here described are impliedly of the character described in 21 : 8.

15. **Not found . . . lake of fire.** Here is the purpose for which the book of life is mentioned in this judgment scene. It was searched that it might be seen if any one's name was not written in it; he whose name was not discovered in it was cast into the lake of fire. There is nothing to indicate that the names of any of the dead (ver. 12) were found written in the book, the whole passage implies the contrary.

Their works were written in the other books, which condemned them. As a further evidence against them the book of life was opened, and no record of their names was found there. The doctrine of the resurrection of all the dead is assumed, as asserted in John 5 : 28, the vision here given is not for the purpose of giving a full account of the resurrection, but for announcing two truths, the assured blessedness of the believer and the destruction of all whose names are not in the Lamb's book of life (13 : 8).

**NOTE 1. THE FIRST RESURRECTION.** It is contended by Alford, that without any doubt, this reference is to a physical resurrection. Against this is the use of the term "souls" (20 : 4), and the absence of any allusion to the resurrection of the bodies. There would also be the entire unfitness of people with glorified bodies living in fellowship with dying men; for sinless men living with men sinful and yielding to temptation. During the millennial era, whatever be its nature, however long it be, sin and death will reign over men to some extent. It is evident that during this period sinful natures yet remain, for at the end of this era wickedness breaks out in a virulent form.

In this book of visions we would not expect any literal resurrection, but only a symbolic one. The term is used here in a strictly spiritual sense. Jesus used the term in this way in John 5 : 25; here a man comes out of spiritual death into spiritual life. It is a resurrection. Paul presents a parallel case in Rom. 11 : 15. When the Jewish race, as such, shall turn to the Lord, the effect on the world will be so overwhelming that it is called a resurrection. At the beginning of this blessed period there is such a widespread increase of piety, so completely do the righteous control things that it is as if the martyrs and godly people had risen from their graves and lived and reigned with Christ. The first resurrection stands in contrast with a second resurrection of like character, though the term is not used. At the end of this period, "the rest of the dead," the ungodly dead rose from their graves, in a figurative way, and lived

and reigned on the earth. The first resurrection was one of blessedness; it introduced a holy and righteous period when Christ had large sway. The second resurrection introduced a spiritually debased and debasing period, when unrighteousness and unholiness had a large triumph. The first resurrection meant a reign of Christ, the second the reign of Satan.

Both the first and second resurrections are within the limits of human history, prior to the general resurrection of all, implied in ver. 12, when all the wicked dead are gathered together and judged, and the righteous dead impliedly are raised and saved, because their names are in the book of life (20 : 15). For a literal resurrection, see Simeox (Cambridge Bible) on 20 : 5.

**NOTE 2. THE MILLENNIUM.** This word means a thousand years; it is mentioned in one place only in the New Testament (Rev. 20 : 2, 3). We would know nothing in reference to it were it not a matter of revelation. Two great features are mentioned as characteristic of this period, and causing it; the bad influences are restrained by Satan being shut up in prison; the good influences are reenforced symbolically, shown by the resurrection and reign of the martyr spirit. The age will be filled with the good-Samaritan spirit; the Bible will be studied, religion will be the business of the world, the church will put on her beautiful robe, the spirit of Christ will leaven the age (Matt. 13 : 33). Augustine and Wordsworth make it begin with the first coming of Christ, and extend through the Messianic era. Grotius and Bush conceive of it as beginning with the fall of the pagan Roman empire, and closing in the sixteenth century. Most interpreters conceive of it as lying entirely in the future. It is nowhere asserted that it will come in an abrupt way, bursting upon the world. It will not come as the result of civilization, it will rather create a higher civilization. Nor must it be understood as a time when all will be holy. At the present time Christ reigns (1 Peter 3 : 22); but there is vast opposition to his supremacy. Doctor Hovey speaks of this

period in these words: "This episode of a thousand years does not represent the conversion of all men living on the earth at that time, as the effect of the first resurrection or the reign of the saints with Christ. Christ will reign forever, though he has enemies forever. So the saints may reign on earth, though they may have many foes among men. It appears to me, upon a careful review of several prophecies, that Christian writers have often used too strong language in depicting the glories of the millennial age, and especially in regard to the conversion of all, or of nearly all, the people."

Occurring in a book of symbols, we must allow something for imagery. John 1 : 11 interpreted in a strictly literal way could make Christ's work among men a failure. In the millennium good men will hold the reins, Jesus will be King of affairs, the spirit of Christ will leaven society. An intelligent revival of religion will anywhere work out something of a millennial nature. Two widely differing views of the millennium are held. The premillennial belief is that the blessed period will be introduced by the personal return of the Lord, and the physical resurrection of the martyrs. This view is presented by Auberlen and Craven in Lange's "Commentary." The postmillennial belief is that the advent of Christ does not occur until after the millennium, and the temporary revival of wickedness. This view is presented in Dr. David Brown's "The Second Advent." The latter view is, as a whole, better supported by the Scriptures. It would be utterly incongruous to think of the glorified Christ and glorified saints living on the earth, at the same time, with mortal and imperfect men. The personal advent of Christ must be placed, not at 20 : 6, but at 20 : 11, introducing a resurrection and the blessed state of things symbolized in the two subsequent chapters. Dr. E. H. Johnson, in his "Systematic Theology" says: "Less certainty rewards inquiry concerning the last things than concerning any other department of Christian truth."

Compare Simcox (Cambridge Bible), on 20 : 4; Swete, "Com.," p. 260 ff.;

Porter, "Messages of Apocalyptic Writers," p. 279 ff.

**NOTE 3. THE QUESTION OF SATAN AND OF EVIL.** It has been an age-long problem how to construct a theodicy, harmonizing the existence and work of Satan, and the existence of evil, in the government of a wise, holy, and almighty God. That there is an eternal personal evil agency, as held in the Persian theology, is unthinkable. This would be to affirm the self-existence of Satan, and therefore his godhead. The Scriptures, in their older and newer parts, allude expressly to a dark and malignant being called Satan. Not much is said of his origin or history, a great deal is said of his character and working. Milton makes him an angel of light, falling by his own voluntary transgression, and becoming fixed in wickedness. It is difficult to conceive of a holy being, in an entirely holy universe, falling by an unholy choice, and yet here, in the region of free agency, must be found the only solution that can satisfy the mind. (See John, Timothy.) The Scriptures reveal him as personal, malicious, deceptive, seducing the unwary, perverting the true teaching, hindering the spread of the gospel. If a person ask why an almighty God permits Satan to exist, the answer will be found in the larger question why God permits evil men and evil institutions to exist. We do know that temptations resisted give a stronger character, that no one is forced, against his own will, to sin, that God can make even evil plans to work into final good. We are called upon to resist the evil one. We are promised all needful help (1 Cor. 10 : 13). The question of evil must not be confounded with the personal existence of a Satan; evil might exist without any headship of evil agencies, as found in Satan. That evil is not from God is evident from this: sin is sin because it is against God's revealed will. The purpose of redemption is to free men from the power of sin, and to limit its province. Satan is powerful, God alone is omnipotent. We may not pray to Satan, as in India; we may pray to God for help against his wiles. Satan will always remain Satan, and ungodliness will always be found in that corner of

the universe known as hell. It is foretold in vision that his power among men will, in the future, be much more restrained, and in time for the redeemed will entirely cease. An enlarged presence of the Holy Spirit, increased knowledge of the truth, a deeper acquaintance with the nature and seductiveness of sin—these will cripple his power. He works now through appetite, eye, ear, social customs, perverted business methods, an impure literature. The absence of a physical organization, a sight of God, fellowship with holy beings, the enlightenment of the moral nature; these, in time, will beget holiness. Human beings will always remain finite and limited; but there is a possibility of becoming a perfect member of a perfect society. Satan, the god of this world, will be crushed under foot. He, with ungodly men, will be shut up in God's prison pen. The closing vision of the New Testament gives us a Satan shut up, and a redeemed earth and a rejoicing church.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The cause of Christ on the earth is not left to take care of itself. All heaven, angels, saints, God, are personally interested in the success of Christ's work here (ver. 1).

2. Each believer may help to hinder Satan by limiting his power and influence. All unholy thoughts driven away, every sinner won from his evil way, the widening of the kingdom of Christ—these by so much bind Satan (ver. 2).

3. It is a glad thing to know that Christ, who has a right to reign, will gain the supremacy at last. The Christian need not despair. Christianity's best days are in the future (ver. 3).

4. Oftentimes it does not pay, in an outward way, to be a devoted Christian. Doors of advancement are often closed; prosperity, seemingly, is for Satan's followers. In time all this will be reversed (ver. 4).

5. Persons passing out of life take their characters with them. The same distinctions that prevail among the living obtain also among the dead. Life decides the destiny (ver. 5).

6. A person born but once dies twice; a person born twice dies but once. The first death is but momentary, and may be painless; the second death is continuous, and hurts the soul (ver. 6).

7. The future is wisely hidden from us. All things are open to God and known by him. We may well permit God to lead us (ver. 7).

8. No weapon that is formed against God can prosper. All God's foes, whether physical, social, intellectual, or philosophical, must go down in utter defeat. In the earthly struggles, one with God makes the majority (ver. 8).

9. The fire of Elijah may consume God's enemies. Men like Carey, Booth, Moody, may equally destroy Satan's kingdom by introducing new methods of work and stimulating Christians to larger lives (ver. 9).

10. It is a great mistake when Satan is conceived of as simply a figure of speech. Jesus reveals him as a malignant being, with large powers of temptation and deception. Jesus is the truth; Satan is a falsehood (ver. 10).

11. The moral inequalities of the present age call for a judgment in the future. The thought of a just judgment should be a source of alarm to the impenitent; the believer may face the white throne in confidence (ver. 11; Rom. 8:1).

12. Every man writes a life in his own character, in the influence upon others, and in God's memory. There is no such thing as a final forgetfulness (ver. 12).

13. Every man lives a solitary life—born, living, dying, judged alone. If a man be condemned, it is his own works that will condemn him. No man can complain of unfairness (ver. 13).

14. Jesus came to destroy death—physical and spiritual. Not extinction of being, but extinction of hope, makes up the second death (ver. 14).

15. The church record may have the names of the unsaved. The church may mistakenly expel a good Christian. The book of life, under the control of Jesus, has, without mistake, the names of those who love the Lord (ver. 15).

16. The book does not save—Jesus does. It reveals character—it is the real Hall of Fame (ver. 15).

*The new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem.*

**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

*x Isa. 65 : 17 ; 66 : 22 ; 2 Peter 3 : 13.*

*y 20 : 11 ; Isa. 24 : 18, 19.*

*z 3 : 12 ; Ps. 48 : 1-3.*

## CHAPTER XXI.

**THE VISION OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH.** With the beginning of this closing section, embracing the last two chapters, we pass from fierce battles and scourges into a scene of everlasting peace. The marriage of the Lamb has been consummated, Satan bound forever, the wicked dead judged, and death and hades destroyed. In these chapters John describes the final and complete establishment of Christ's kingdom. We have the vision of the new heaven and new earth (ver. 1-8); then, as the center and capital of the new creation, we have a vision of the new Jerusalem (ver. 9-27).

### 1-8. THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH.

**1.** New relates not so much to time as to quality; it is something of finer mold than the world has ever seen. The **heaven** and **earth** are recreated. This does not mean that the present worldly structure is to be destroyed, but so changed that it will seem like a new domicile for man—a glorified residence for glorified men. This change will consist largely in the elimination of evil. In the present world, if moral evil were removed, it would be a vestibule of heaven. Isaiah had spoken of this time (25 : 6-8; 65 : 17-25, which read). Isaiah describes what the gospel will accomplish; John the dimensions and quality of Christ's kingdom when the work is done. This is the "regeneration" spoken of in Matt. 19 : 28, and that change spoken of in Acts 3 : 21. There is the removal of the imperfect and transitory, and the introduction of that which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12 : 26, 27). We may introduce here the words of Peter (2 Peter 3 : 10-12). It may be asked whether this world itself is to be part of the home of the redeemed. The Scriptures are

**21** AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven

not given us as a geography. Paul speaks of a groaning and a glorification of nature (Rom. 8 : 21). It is not unreasonable to think that a world pronounced "good" (Gen. 1 : 31), cursed by sin, should itself be part of the inheritance of God's people. Body, mind, heart, associations, will be glorified for the saints; it may also be that the world made through Christ (John 1 : 3) will share in the manifested glory of Christ. It is not a matter of importance to know where heaven is; it is where Christ is. Heaven is a place; it is also a condition, inasmuch as there must be heavenliness to make heaven. **Sea.** To the Hebrew the sea was not a delight; it was the picture of unrest, disturbance, separation. It was the sea which surrounded John and kept him prisoner in Patmos. There will be no such sea as that from which the beast came (13 : 1). This statement means that in the place we call heaven the saints can have fellowship without hindrance. There will be peace and delight there, indicated by the river of 22 : 1; but nothing violent—made a terror by the storm. The Hebrews were not a seafaring people.

**2.** This verse describes what will be in the new heaven and earth. There will be not a wilderness, nor saints living separate from each other, but the complex, associated life of the city. It is a **city** great and glorious, the chief characteristic of which is, it is **holy**. The great struggle among men is to purify the city which controls the national life. This city comes from **God**, fitting origin for that which is to be the center of helpful influences for a new world. It is **new**, fitting the new order of things, and is in contrast with the old Jerusalem. This vision of Jerusalem produces, in a condensed and transfigured form, the vision given in Ezekiel. John sees the glorified city coming as the bride of the Lamb.

of heaven, prepared <sup>a</sup> as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, <sup>b</sup> the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, <sup>c</sup> and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, <sup>d</sup> and be their God. <sup>e</sup> And 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes' [Isa. xxv. 8]; and <sup>f</sup> there shall be no more death, <sup>g</sup> neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: <sup>h</sup> for the former things are passed away.

5 And <sup>i</sup> 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.

from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor will mourning, nor crying, nor pain be any more; because the first things are passed away. And he who sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he says, Write; because these words are faith-

*a* 19 : 7, 8; Eph. 5 : 25-27.

*b* Ezek. 37 : 28; 2 Cor. 6 : 16.

*c* Jer. 31 : 33; Zech. 8 : 8.

*d* 7 : 17; Isa. 25 : 8.

*e* 20 : 14; 22 : 3.

*f* Isa. 35 : 10; 65 : 19.

*g* 2 Cor. 6 : 17; 2 Peter 3 : 10; 1 John 2 : 17.

*h* 4 : 2, 9; 5 : 1; 20 : 11.

*i* Isa. 42 : 9; 43 : 19.

*k* 19 : 9.

He identifies the bride with the holy city, the dwelling-place of the bride. The new Jerusalem will be the product of the redemptive forces which God set at work. **Bride.** The beauty of the city is thus described. In the Old Testament times God desired Jerusalem, representing God's professed people, to be his bride, but the people were indifferent and rebellious (Isa. 62 : 5). In the Gospels Jesus is the bridegroom (Eph. 5 : 23; Col. 1 : 18). God's redeemed people constitute the bride of Christ spoken of sometimes as the church, and sometimes as the holy city. At present the church is imperfect; it will be complete (Eph. 5 : 25-27).

**3. Great voice.** This is best understood as the voice of God and of the Lamb, who are so united as to have one throne (22 : 1). The beatific state of the city will be due to the presence of God in it. The symbolism of the ancient tabernacle will be realized. God will be with men. It will be a glorified humanity, in a renovated earth, consisting not of Jews only, but of all peoples. (Comp. 7 : 15-17.) The old tabernacle served its purpose in presenting the promise that God would dwell among men and commune with them (Exod. 29 : 42-46). The New Testament gives an entrance into the holiest (Heb. 10 : 19), the witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8 : 14-16), and the divine sonship (1 John 3 : 1). The crowning glory of heaven will be not the exemp-

tion from physical ills, but the fellowship with God through Christ. God will not be separated from men by priests and veils, not be concealed in a secluded holy of holies, but God's people will become the temple and tabernacle of the living God.

**4.** Details of the blessed life are mentioned. **Tears** (Isa. 25 : 8); **death** (20 : 14); **mourning** (Isa. 65 : 10); **crying** (Isa. 65 : 19). It is implied that the opposites of these, in their fulness, will be there. In the present life sorrows, disappointments, burdens, limitations of life, bodily afflictions (Rom. 8 : 23), conflicts in the inner life (Rom. 7 : 19), these will exist only in remembrance. Trials and limitations belong to the **first things**; the new things have come to remain.

**5. He . . . throne.** (Comp. 19 : 11-16; 22 : 1). **New.** (Comp. Isa. 43 : 19; 2 Cor. 5 : 17.) The entire plan of God was working toward this consummation. The new heaven and earth, the bodies of the saints, the moral natures, the social relations, all will be adjusted to each other. The old physical nature of men and of the world would be out of harmony with the highest life. Blinded minds, indwelling passions, and selfishness would at once destroy any holy city. Jesus alludes to the differences between the present and future existence (Matt. 22 : 30; Luke 20 : 34-36). **Faithful.** (Comp. 19 : 11.)

**6, 7.** There were seven angels of judgment, each one announcing dis-

6 And he said unto me, <sup>1</sup>It is done. <sup>m</sup>I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. <sup>n</sup>I will give unto him that is athirst <sup>o</sup>of the fountain of <sup>7</sup>the water of life freely. <sup>q</sup>He that overcometh <sup>r</sup>shall inherit all things; and <sup>s</sup>I will be his God, and he shall be <sup>8</sup>my son. <sup>t</sup>But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and <sup>u</sup>all liars, shall have their part in <sup>v</sup>the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

6 ful and true. And he said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that thirsts, of the fountain of the water of life freely. <sup>7</sup>He that overcomes shall inherit these things; and I will be to him a God; <sup>8</sup>and he shall be to me a son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and defiled with abominations, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all the liars, their part shall be in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

<sup>l</sup> 16 : 17. <sup>m</sup> 1 : 8. <sup>n</sup> 7 : 17; 22 : 17; Isa. 12 : 3; 55 : 1-3; John 4 : 10, 14; 7 : 37, 38.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. 36 : 9; Jer. 2 : 13. <sup>p</sup> 1 Cor. 2 : 12. <sup>q</sup> 2 : 11. <sup>r</sup> Isa. 65 : 9; Matt. 19 : 29; 1 Cor. 3 : 21-23.

<sup>s</sup> Ver. 3; Zech. 8 : 8; Rom. 8 : 15-17; Heb. 8 : 10.

<sup>t</sup> 22 : 15; 1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10; Gal. 5 : 19-21; Eph. 5 : 5; 1 Tim. 1 : 9; Heb. 12 : 14.

<sup>u</sup> Ver. 27; Rom. 1 : 25. <sup>v</sup> 19 : 20; 20 : 14, 15.

aster. Then followed "It is done" (16 : 17-19). In the two following chapters was a description of the fall of Babylon. In contrast we have seven visions, showing the progress of God's kingdom; the ideal picture of the Messiah (19 : 11-16); the call to the supper (ver. 17, 18); the destruction of the beast and false prophet (ver. 19-21); Satan imprisoned (20 : 1-3); enemies crushed (ver. 4-10); judgment upon the wicked (ver. 11-18); the renovation of the earth (20 : 1-8). Then come the words, **It is done**, followed by a description of the new Jerusalem. **Alpha.** (See 1 : 8.) Two characteristics of the inhabitants of the city are given. **Thirsty.** On earth, having drunk of God's grace, deeper desires are awakened; these will now be satisfied fully. Heaven is a place of enlarging life, of increased desire and increased satisfaction; it is a place of growth in all directions. **Overcometh.** The same term is used in the messages to the churches (chaps. II, III). The Christian life involves longing and earnestness, and begets a struggle. Low views of life, passions within, satanic temptations necessitate conflicts. (See Paul's words in 2 Tim. 4 : 7, 8; 1 Cor. 9 : 26, 27; Eph. 6 : 10-18). **Son.** Then will be the perfect fulfilment of 2 Sam. 7 : 14; Zech. 8 : 8.

8. We have a statement in contrast with the preceding, announcing the penalty upon the ungodly. The excluded are placed in four groups of two each, described according to their characteristic sins. **Fearful.** The

cowardly in heart, shrinking from the struggle involved in the Christian life. **Unbelieving.** Those not trusting and obeying Christ; these two are not the positively bad, but they are not pronounced for righteousness. **Abominable.** Those practising foul and unclean rites in connection with idol worship. **Idolaters.** Persons making idols of the world, gold, or self. **Liar.** Kinsmen of Satan, who is a liar, distorting a true view of things (John 8 : 44). There must come a time of final separation between the bad and the good. The wicked are excluded from heaven because of their unfitness to dwell there. To be in a place of absolute holiness would be only an aggravation to the ungodly. There is no hint here that there will be any end to their exclusion. Eternal punishment springs, not from God's omnipotence, but from the nature of God, and the character of sin. **Lake.** (See 20 : 14.) **Death.** (See 2 : 11; 20 : 6, 14.)

**9-27. VISION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.** The center of the new earth is a holy city. The old Jerusalem was the joy of the Jewish world (Ps. 48). This is a city where God makes his dwelling-place with men. Then follows a minute description of the city, clothed in symbolic forms. Under these material features are spiritual realities. We have the structure and plan of the city (ver. 11-23); the holy character of the city (ver. 24-27); the felicity of the life within (22 : 1-5).

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 show thee <sup>z</sup> the bride, the Lamb's wife.  
 10 And he carried me away <sup>a</sup> in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me <sup>b</sup> that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, <sup>c</sup> having the glory of God. And her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had <sup>d</sup> a wall great and high, *and* had <sup>e</sup> 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: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west 14 three gates. And the wall of the city

9 And there came one from among the seven angels, who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me, saying, Come hither; I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven 11 from God, having the glory of God; her luminary like a most precious stone, as it were a jasper stone, clear 12 as crystal; having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the 13 twelve tribes of the sons of Israel; on the east were three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three 14 gates. And the wall of the city had

<sup>y</sup> 15 : 1, 7; 17 : 1.      <sup>z</sup> Ver. 2; 19 : 7.

<sup>a</sup> 17 : 3; Ezek. 40 : 2.

<sup>b</sup> Ver. 2; Ezek. 48.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 22, 23; 22 : 5; Isa. 4 : 5; 60 : 1, 3, 19, 20; Ezek. 48 : 35.

<sup>d</sup> Ver. 17-20; Isa. 26 : 1.

<sup>e</sup> Ver. 21, 25; Isa. 54 : 12; 60 : 18; Ezek. 48 : 31-34.

**9. Angels.** There is the widest possible contrast between the woes described by the seven bowls, and this vision revealed by one of the same angels who poured out the bowls. He had showed John the vision of the harlot—Babylon the great (17 : 1-3). In that vision the woman represents the worldly city; here the woman represents the bride, the Lamb's wife, the holy city. Harlot and Lamb's wife, Babylon and Jerusalem, stand in contrast with each other. The holy city and the bride are figurative descriptions of the glorified cause of Christ.

**10, 11.** There is a contrast between this vision and that in 17 : 3. There it was a wilderness; here it is a **mountain**, great and high. The city must be conceived of, not as on the mountain, but near it. John has a position, in the vision, on the mountain, that so he may have a perfect view of it. Compare a parallel vision in Ezek. 40 : 1, 2. We have now a complete description of the city, of which we had a glimpse in ver. 2. **Glory.** God's abiding presence was the light of the city (ver. 23. Comp. Isa. 60 : 19.) Allusion may be had to the cloud of glory which filled the tabernacle (Exod. 40 : 34). The brilliancy of the light is like the effulgence of a precious stone, probably the diamond. Light is the

symbol of joy, purity, the absence of imperfection.

**12, 13.** Being an Oriental city it is presented to us with the features that belong to such a city. To show that security reigns in the city there must be **walls great and high**, assuring the absolute safety that Jesus speaks of in John 10 : 29. The description is based upon Ezek. 48 : 30-35. The **twelve gates** are reminders of the encampment about the tabernacle, the place of worship in the wilderness. The **angels** are additional symbols of protection. Upon the gates as on the stones of the ephod (Exod. 28 : 9), on the breastplate of the high priest (Exod. 39 : 14) were written the names of the twelve tribes. This does not mean that the twelve tribes will have any precedence in the glorified life, for all distinctions are wiped away. John is moving here in the region of Old Testament imagery, and therefore the twelve tribes stand for the entire people of God. For the order in which the names stand see one list in Ezek. 48; for a slightly different order see Num. 2 : 1-21. From the fact that the city faces the four quarters, the universal character of the new Jerusalem may be inferred.

**14.** This must be understood of twelve courses making one foundation. The apostles occupy an important place in the New Testament, their teachings

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. 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 17 are equal. 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

twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he who spoke with me had a golden reed for a measure to measure the city, and its gates, and its wall. 16 And the city lies foursquare, and its length is as great as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs; the length, and the breadth, and the height of it 17 are equal. And he measured its wall a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18 And the material of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, 19 like pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, em-

*f* Ver. 19-21; Isa. 54:11; Heb. 11:10.  
*i* Ezek. 48:16, 20.

*g* Eph. 2:20.  
*k* Ezek. 48:8-19.

*h* 11:1, 2; Ezek. 40:3; Zech. 2:1.  
*l* Job 28:16-19; Prov. 3:15; Isa. 54:11.

may be regarded as the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). The twelve tribes and the twelve apostles equal in number the twenty-four elders, standing for the universal kingdom of God in the Old and New Testament times. Through human agencies and through fundamental doctrines the kingdom of God was founded and grew.

15. The magnitude of the kingdom of God is given through recorded measurements. The city, the wall, the gates are measured. This elaborate measuring is designed to impress the mind with the reality, the magnitude of the life beyond. It is not a dream, a vision merely, it is an actual something that can be measured. The glorified existence is as real as if it could be measured. It is symbolic, but speaks of real things.

16, 17. The city forms a perfect cube, about fifteen hundred miles in each dimension or in the entire circuit. Inasmuch as the measurement and the numbers are symbolical, it is of no great importance to determine to which of these this number refers. The plain meaning seems to be that the city is immense in extent, surpassing anything that the world had seen; and it was cubical in shape, typical of its perfect nature. There may be a reference to the holy of holies, which was a perfect cube. The measuring asserts that all things have been brought

into exact conformity with God's will, pledges God's guardianship of the minutest parts of the city, and reveals the city as surpassing in size anything the mind of man had conceived. No such city has ever been seen, nor is conceivable, but the meaning conveyed is plain and comforting. God's cause in the future will be glorious and perfect. **Wall.** It is probable that the thickness of the wall is here given, not the height. The thought expressed is that of perfect security against all assaults. The almighty, the love, the wisdom of God surround it. **Angel.** In the act of measuring the method of the angel is as if a man had measured it, the city is described under human figures (Zech. 2:5). The teaching by symbol is that heaven is beyond the comprehension of human thought (1 Cor. 2:9).

18. The vision exhausts figurative language in describing the glory of the city. **Gold.** The city is described as pure gold, and yet so unlike that of earth, transfigured and glorified, that it is transparent, like glass.

19, 20. We have a further description of the foundations, the materials of which they are composed. **Jasper.** Probably the diamond. **Sapphire.** Probably the moderu lapis lazuli, of a clear blue color and very precious.

**Chalcedony.** Probably an agate, sky blue, with stripes of other colors,

- 20 emerald ; the fifth, sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolite ; 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 : <sup>m</sup> and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.
- 22 <sup>n</sup> And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. <sup>p</sup> And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : <sup>q</sup> for the glory of God did lighten it, <sup>r</sup> and the Lamb is the light thereof.
- 23

- 20 erald ; the fifth, sardonyx ; the sixth, sardius ; the seventh, chrysolite ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, topaz ; the tenth, chrysoprasus ; the eleventh, a hyacinth ; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls ; each several gate was of one pearl ; and the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass. And a temple I saw not in it ; for the Lord, God, the Almighty, is its temple, and the Lamb. And the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine on it ; for the glory of God lightened it,

<sup>m</sup> 22 : 2 ; Isa. 60 : 17, 18.

<sup>n</sup> Isa. 66 : 1 ; John 4 : 23.

<sup>o</sup> Ver. 3.

<sup>p</sup> 22 : 5 ; Isa. 24 : 23 ; 60 : 19, 20.

<sup>q</sup> Ver. 11 ; 18 : 1 ; Isa. 2 : 19, 21 ; Hab. 3 : 3.

<sup>r</sup> John 8 : 12.

brought from Chalcedony. **Emerald.** The same as the modern stone, of a green color. **Sardonyx.** A kind of onyx, valued for its use in engraving into cameos. **Sardius.** Probably our carnelian. **Chrysolite.** A variety of the gem known as the topaz, of yellow color. **Beryl.** A variety of emerald, of bluish green color, like the pure sea. **Topaz.** Probably of a yellow-green color. **Chrysoprase.** Probably a variety of the emerald, of a yellowish, pale green color. **Jacinth.** Probably a stone of yellow amber color. **Amethyst.** Probably the purple stone now known by that name. All the precious stones referred to in the Scriptures are named to give the impression of the superior glory of the heavenly city. It is impossible to give a separate spiritual meaning to each of these foundation stones, or to assign to each of these stones the name of an apostle. God builds the city that hath foundations (*Heb. 11 : 10*), not with common stones, but with the rarest and most precious stones. Heaven far surpasses earth.

**21.** The entire Scripture emphasizes the surpassing splendor of the city. **Pearl.** Such entrances are fitting portals for such a city. **Street.** The singular is employed for the entire street system of the city. In so large a city there must be many streets.

**22. No temple.** In Jerusalem the central place was the temple. In Ezekiel's vision the vast proportions of the temple formed a conspicuous part ; its gigantic dimensions showed that all was figurative. The present vision passes on to a higher state of things.

The physical temple is replaced by a far more glorious spiritual temple. The inhabitants need no fixed outward place of worship, for God and the Lamb are ever present with them. The glory of God fills the city, and the city itself is the bride of the Lamb. The entire city, shown by its cubical form, is a holy of holies, in which each one dwells. Temples, meeting-houses, and stated times of worship are not needed here. Heaven has no temple, for it is all temple, and holiest of all, its entire life is worship. The golden city is the reality, of which the old temple and tabernacle were outward symbols. All that the temple symbolized, in its highest ideal, is realized by those whose lives are hidden with Christ in God (*Col. 3 : 3*), who abide in God himself (*1 John 4 : 16*). A country on the earth without a place of worship would be a Sodom.

**23. Sun.** This is the realization of Isaiah's prediction in *Isa. 60 : 19, 20*. All other light is without luster in comparison with the brilliancy of the glory of God and of Christ. The glory of God is the sun which illuminates the New Jerusalem, and his light is reflected from the Lamb, who is the effulgence of the Father's glory (*Heb. 1 : 3*). All this would not imply, if the earth were a part of the inheritance of the redeemed, that sun, moon, and stars were blotted out, but that the moral light and glory surpass everything else. A city in which all have the spiritual life of a Judson or a Carey, freed from their imperfections, would be a brilliantly illumined city.

**24.** This description is based entirely

24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring 25 their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night 26 there. 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.

s 22 : 2; Ps. 22 : 27; Isa. 60 : 3; 66 : 12, 18. t Isa. 2 : 5.  
u Ps. 72 : 10, 11; Isa. 60 : 3-10, 13; 66 : 11, 12. x Isa. 60 : 11. y 22 : 5; Isa. 60 : 20; Zech. 14 : 6, 7.  
z 22 : 14, 15; Lev. 13 : 46; Num. 5 : 3; Ps. 101 : 8; Isa. 35 : 8; 52 : 1; 60 : 21; Joel 3 : 17.  
a 17 : 4, 5. b Ver. 8 : 22 : 15. c 3 : 5; 13 : 8; 20 : 12; Phil. 4 : 3.

upon the language of Old Testament prophecy; it is the fulfilment of Isa. 60 : 3, 11, 19. We are not to interpret this as if, besides the glorified saints in the holy city, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations organized under kings who shall, from time to time, visit the holy city, and bring their treasures into it, and be served by means of the influence of the holy city. The final consummation has taken place, and on this renewed earth there shall be no other inhabitants except the glorified saints, who compose the holy city Jerusalem, constituting the bride of the Lamb (21 : 9). The Gentiles will be among the glorified saints in the city, and among them those who ruled as kings. There is no Scripture foundation for the view that nations shall dwell on the renewed earth outside the holy city, and not belonging to its inhabitants. Such a view would be in contradiction of the establishment of a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. It would also contradict the statement in ver. 27, that none but the redeemed find entrance within the gates. For the prophets to declare that kings brought their presents into the old Jerusalem, would be to show the triumph of God's kingdom. The same figure is employed here to illustrate the final supremacy of the cause of Christ. The holy city stands for a redeemed world.

**25. Shut.** Read Isaiah's picture of the future of Zion (Isa. 60 : 11). The reason why the gates are always open is because it is always day. Peace and security dwell there. The perils of the heart, the allurements of the world,

the temptations of Satan, the persecutions of the beast (13 : 7), have all passed away. Eastern cities always closed their gates at night; in war they were closed all the time.

**26. Bring.** The word is used in an impersonal way, not necessarily referring to the kings of the preceding verse. It will be a treasure city, in which all glory will be stored. As in ancient capitals the spoils of captive nations were stored, here the holy city will exhibit the glories of God and the gifts of the saved. (Comp. Isa. 60 : 5-10; 66 : 12.)

**27.** The three preceding verses showed the character of those who enter the holy city; this verse describes those who are excluded. Only those enter who are morally worthy. (Comp. Isa. 52 : 1.) Jesus everywhere spoke of a final separation among men, a separation based on character (Matt. 25 : 31-46). The regenerate only, the saved through Christ, find admission. The Lamb's book of life has the names of those who will share in the glory of the Lamb. John is following here in the footsteps of Ezekiel, who describes the discomfiture of God's enemies, then gives a vision of the holy city, the glorious temple, and the revelation of God's glory.

**NOTE. THE SYMBOLICAL CHARACTER OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.** To interpret this chapter in a literal way would be to strip it of its beauty. Such a city as is here described, taken in its literal sense, would be grotesque and impossible. It is useless to speculate on the method of life in a city

three hundred and seventy-five miles high, or calculate how many people it would contain. When we read in Ezekiel (*chap. XL-XLVIII*) of a temple whose size is bewildering in its vastness, we are not deceived. We understand that it is not to be interpreted literally. Under the imposing imagery is the teaching that God's cause will be as much grander than the past history, as this temple in vision surpassed the old temple in Jerusalem. In rejecting the literal interpretation we do not thereby throw aside the reality of the teachings implied by the vision. We may not insist on walls, or city, or gates, or gold; but we must not regard the vision as a dream or a poetical imagination having no substantial teaching. The new Jerusalem is a prophecy divinely given, presenting the glorious outcome of Christianity in its work among men. Christianity has had a varied history. Christ, the founder, was rejected, the apostles were not men of genius, the doctrines preached were repugnant to the natural heart. Persecutions followed the church, heresies arose, worldliness proved a greater foe than open opposition. Literature, power, culture, ritualism, imperfect religions—all these were arrayed against Christ. This vision tells us what the outcome will be. Many of the readers of this book had seen the old Jerusalem with its narrow streets, its walls that could not stand attack, surrounded by foes, within whose walls were corruption and sorrows. Here are portrayed a perfected human nature, a regenerate society, a glorified life, the absence of ills of every kind, the fellowship of all the redeemed with the Redeemer. Christ has triumphed in that he is acknowledged supreme in his own dominion, and wickedness has been eliminated and shut up in sin's prison house. All nations share in this triumph of Christ. No heathen religion, no human conceptions have ever, in their dreams, pictured such a blessed final consummation as this vision gives to us. The city will be a temple, life will be worship, glory and God will have their home there.

The teaching of this chapter is entirely irrespective of the question whether this earth will be the home

of the descending holy city. Even if this earth should be no part of the heavenly inheritance, it would be needful to make the truth known to us through earthly figures. Christianity, in its glorified form, will find somewhere a fitting sphere, in which believers in holy love will serve Christ and each other. That place will be the new Jerusalem. It will then be seen that all the figures of this vision will have been more than fulfilled.

"On the Christian society as the realization of the heavenly Jerusalem, see Westcott on *Heb. 11:10* (additional note)" (SWETE).

"Figurative language is the only language in which we can express our hope of heaven, and no figures can have greater power to suggest this hope than those taken from the literal longings of exiled Israel for the recovery of its land and city." PORTER, "Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers," p. 288. *Ezek.*, *chap. XL-XLVIII*; *Isa. 54:11, 12*; *Isa. 60:10-14*.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. Jesus makes everything new. There is a new covenant, a new heart, a new man, a new song, a new name, a new heaven and earth, a new Jerusalem (ver. 1).

2. The chief feature of heaven will be, not happiness or exemption from physical ills and death, but holiness. No one will enjoy heaven who does not enjoy holiness (ver. 2).

3. Alienation from God is the mark of the sinful man; intimacy with God and fellowship with him are the marks and the privileges of the Christian (ver. 3).

4. The language of heaven will differ vastly from that of earth. The words tear, death, suffering, temptation, crying, will all be things of the past (ver. 4).

5. The words of a faithful and true Redeemer may be depended on. They may be long in coming to pass, but in time promise will ripen into performance (ver. 5).

6. The soul will be satisfied in the heavenly life. There will be enlarging desires and enlarging satisfaction as the ages go by. Satan makes springs that dry up, Jesus makes living fountains (ver. 6).

7. Jesus was an overcoming Christ. The Christian must overcome. Salvation means a struggle, it means, at the end, a crown (ver. 7).

8. Heaven will have all holy people on the inside, and all the ungodly on the outside. The separation will be on the basis of character (ver. 8).

9. The Christian and the church must have now a moral likeness to Christ. In time there will be a complete likeness to Christ, and a sharing in the glory of Christ (ver. 9).

10. The purification of men and of society is not from below upward, but from above downward. A heavenly society upon the earth can be secured only by the divine Spirit in the individual (ver. 10).

11. The presence of God gives light in the heart, in the home, in society, in business and political relations. Cruelty and selfishness disappear when Christ is known as Saviour (ver. 11).

12. In every earthly life are many perils from within and from without. In the heavenly life will be no deceptions in the heart, no allurements to evil. The life of absolute security will be a blessed life (ver. 12).

13. Heaven embraces people from all races and lands. The New Testament widens it out, making one family from all the redeemed (ver. 13).

14. The apostles entered heaven through hardship and persecution, but their names make an enduring foundation for all time (ver. 14).

15. Many of the details of the heavenly life we do not know. Knowledge of them would do us no good. We are sure there is a heaven; and we know how to get there (ver. 15).

16. The safety of God's people depends on being Christ's and with Christ (ver. 17).

17. In heaven will be all Christian excellencies. But each one will have his own individuality, sanctified and set apart for holy purposes. Each one will be himself, but he will be his best self (ver. 19).

18. Earth may be compared to common clay, heaven to pure gold, and that refined. Paul could not describe the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:4). Nor can John, ex-

cept by indistinct figures. It must be enjoyed to be understood (ver. 21).

19. In the earthly life meeting-houses are a necessity. In heaven all life is worship, and the city itself is a holy of holies (ver. 22).

20. All light is darkness when compared with the glory of God's presence (ver. 23).

21. When Christianity has finished its work on the earth, it will be found to have embraced all nations under its sway. It is a conquering religion. The highest will count it a privilege to serve the King of kings (ver. 24).

22. The night of sorrow, disappointment, and death, will pass away, and an eternal morning will come. That will be a blessed land, where it is always sunshine (ver. 25).

23. Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. The presence of the morally unclean would be out of harmony with God's nature, would be a peril to the godly, would give no comfort to the ungodly themselves (ver. 27).

24. The book of life has in it the names of those who are spiritually alive. The names get there, not through personal worthiness, but in God's mercy through belief in the Saviour. "Is my name written there?" (ver. 27).

## CHAPTER XXII.

In this chapter we have the concluding part of the vision that fills the preceding chapter. It is unfortunate that these parts should be separated. The vision is now presented under the figure of the paradise of God. It forms part of one general conception, but assumes the figure, not of the holy city, but of a paradise (ver. 1-5). Following this we have the assurance, from the angel, of the truth of the Apocalypse (ver. 6, 7). Then John himself gives testimony, vouching for the reality of what he had seen and heard (ver. 8, 9). We have a final message of the angel to John (ver. 10, 11). Then in an impressive way Jesus himself gives a message witnessing for this book (ver. 12-17). In closing there is the command that the book shall be looked upon as holy, followed by a benediction (ver. 18-21).

**22** AND he showed me <sup>a</sup>a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>f</sup>In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there <sup>g</sup>the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were <sup>h</sup>for the healing of the nations.

**3** And <sup>i</sup>there shall be no more curse

*d Ps. 36 : 8; 46 : 4; Ezek. 47 : 1-9; Zech. 14 : 8.*

*g 2 : 7; Gen. 2 : 9.*

*h 21 : 24; Ps. 147 : 3; Ezek. 47 : 8-12; Mal. 4 : 2.*

*i 21 : 4; Zech. 14 : 11; comp. Gen. 3 : 17.*

**22** AND he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, going forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of its street, and on each side of the river, was a tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, every month yielding its fruit; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

**3** And there will be no more curse. And

**1-5. THE PARADISE OF GOD.** The Old Testament begins with a paradise, where beauty and innocence prevailed. Then follows the long era, with the conflict of good and evil in the world. Now, at the close, we have a paradise restored. Ruin comes through sin, the redemption through Christ brings a restoration.

**1.** The psalmist speaks of a gladdening stream (*Ps. 46 : 4*). For the Old Testament foundation of this passage see *Ezek. 47 : 1-12*; *Zech. 14 : 8*. Comp. *Gen. 2 : 10*; *Joel 3 : 18*. Notice the union

**God and of the Lamb.** (Comp. *3 : 21*.)

**River.** Jesus speaks of rivers of living water (*John 7 : 33, 39*), having reference to the Holy Spirit. Many think the reference here is to the Holy Spirit supplying constantly, in an abundant way, the spiritual life. Rivers on the earth supply nourishment and life, giving freshness and beauty to nature. In like manner this river is the symbol of the constant supply of God's grace to his people. To conceive of heaven as a paradise there must be the sight of water, such as John gives. That the river finds its source in the throne of God, is the assurance that God will constantly renew the life and joy of his people, will uphold the kingdom of God, in its ripened form, in all its manifold agencies. The vision of a swamp, of a meager stream, of a river whose waters were dried up, would be out of place and saddening.

**2.** (Comp. *Ezek. 47 : 7-12*.) **Street.** John sees the main street of the city through which the river is flowing. This statement must be understood as applying to all the streets of the city; on both sides are trees. The word **tree** is used, not of one tree, but in a collective sense embraces the entire

mass of trees. For the tree of life see *Gen. 2 : 9*; there it was shut off from sinful man, here it is open to all. As water is essential to life and growth, symbolized by the river, so there must be food for the spiritual life, symbolized by the fruit of the tree. The food is continuous, **every month**, signifying the ever new enjoyment of the blessed. For glorified bodies, like those of the angels (*Mark 12 : 25*), no physical aid will be needed. It is not so much twelve kinds of fruit here promised, as a continuous supply ministered by the one tree. **Nations.**

This term cannot be applied to unconverted people, for only the saved have entered into the city. Some think that it applies to other than Jewish people who have been saved. In heaven, however, all social distinctions will be removed, and the Jewish race will have no preeminence over others.

**Healing.** This cannot be pressed to mean that moral infirmities will remain, or that somewhere in that blessed era there will be people not glorified. When it is said that God will wipe away all tears (*21 : 4*), it cannot be inferred that occasion for tears will be found there, but that the tears which are wept in the earthly life, will be wiped away in the eternal blessedness. In like manner the healing leaves of the tree served for the healing of the sickness from which the nations suffered in the earthly life, but from which they are delivered in the new Jerusalem. The infirmities, limitations of life, poverty of soul, blindness of mind—all of these are eternally removed. Bodily, intellectual, moral, and spiritual defects, are all remedied.

**3. Curse.** (Comp. *Gen. 3 : 14-19*.) All the effects of sin have passed away.

[Zech. xiv. 11]: <sup>k</sup> but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and <sup>m</sup> his name <sup>5</sup> shall be in their foreheads. <sup>n</sup> And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for <sup>o</sup> the Lord God giveth them light: <sup>p</sup> and they shall reign for ever and ever.

*Final testimony, invitation, warnings, and promises.*

6 AND he said unto me, <sup>q</sup> These sayings are faithful and true: and the

the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it; and his servants will serve him, and will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will be no night there; and they need no lamp light, nor sunlight, because the Lord God will give them light; and they will reign forever and ever.

6 And he said to me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord, the

*k* 7 : 17; *Ezek.* 48 : 35.      *l* *Exod.* 33 : 18-20, 23; *Job* 33 : 24-26; *Isa.* 33 : 17; 35 : 2; *Matt.* 5 : 8; *1 John* 3 : 2. *m* 3 : 12.      *n* 21 : 23-25.      *o* *Ps.* 36 : 9; *Isa.* 60 : 19.      *p* 3 : 21; *Dan.* 7 : 27; *2 Tim.* 2 : 12. *q* 19 : 9; *Isa.* 25 : 1.

All evil things have been eternally destroyed (<sup>20</sup> : 15). Here dwell God, Jesus under the aspect of the Saviour who was sacrificed, and the saved, to whom service is a delight. The glorified life is one of enlarged activity. Buddhism makes the future one of absorption into the deity or extinction, not loving service.

**4. Face.** Compare the statement in Gen. 3 : 8 of God's fellowship with our first parents. What was denied to Moses, a sight of God's face (*Exod.* 33 : 20), is here granted to all the saved. There will be the sight of the glorified Christ. How much more is involved in what is known as the beatific vision of God we may not now know. Fellowship with God beyond comparison with that of earth, is here declared. The term, face, stands for the entire revelation of God, as the man's character shines out in the face. There will be displays of God's character such as have not before been manifested. **Name.** (*Comp.* 8 : 12; 14 : 1.) This term stands for all there is of a person, hence it is here declared that the moral likeness to God stands out openly in the person and life of the believer. There may also be the assertion of ownership on the part of God. In the olden times the high priest wore upon his forehead a plate, on which was inscribed the name of Jehovah. Every saved man fills the position of a high priest, on whose forehead itself is the name of Jehovah.

**5. Night.** (*Comp.* 21 : 23-25.) This statement is made, not to indicate the security of the place, but to show that

the saints suffer no interruption in their service, and need no nightly rest to recruit their strength for further service. It is not specified over whom they shall reign. Paul speaks of saints judging angels (<sup>1 Cor.</sup> 6 : 3); some have conjectured here a superintendence over the wide realm of nature. The term may be used in a general sense, for the exalted state upon which they have entered. It signifies the use of large faculties, continuing through eternity. They both serve and reign. **Light.** As their frame never wearies, so the conditions necessary for the accomplishment of their service never fail. With this verse the Apocalypse proper, beginning at 4 : 1, comes to an end. In 1 : 9 John is their companion in tribulation; the vision ends with the saints reigning as kings in glory.

**6-21. THE CONCLUSION.** The Apocalypse began, like the Gospel of John, with a prologue. Like the Gospel, it also closes with an epilogue. The correspondences in the structure of the two writings bear testimony to the sameness of authorship. This conclusion gives assurance of the truthfulness of the things revealed. The speakers are the angel, John, and the Lord Jesus himself.

**6-11. AN ASSURANCE OF THE TRUTH OF THE APOCALYPSE.** We have here passing before us large views of God's moral government, vials of judgment, the fall of opposing powers. Are they dreams, or under these visions have we realities?

**6.** These are the words, not of John, but of the angel spoken of in 1 : 1.

Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show 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 showed me

9 these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the

God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Happy is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I, John, am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me

9 these things. And he says to me, See thou do it not. I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the

r 1 : 1.

s Ver. 12, 20; 3 : 11.

t 1 : 3.

u 19 : 10.

He gives assurance that the things spoken of can be depended on. The reference is not to the teachings concerning the new Jerusalem alone, but to the entire message found in the entire book. The same God who worked in the **prophets**, guiding them in teaching and foretelling, dwells in the angel. The possibility of an inspiration, an illuminating and guiding of the human mind, is here asserted. The testimony of the angel must be placed on the same level as that of the Old Testament prophets. **Servants.** The book concerns all, good and bad alike, with its blessings and judgments. But it is given for the sake of his own people, for their comfort, assurance, and guidance. **Shortly.** The predictions began to be fulfilled at that time, the principles of God's administration in all the ages being manifested then.

7. The first part of this verse must be referred to the Lord Jesus himself. The same expression occurs in ver. 12, 20. (Comp. 3 : 11.) In some real sense the **quickly** must come true. The beginning of the fulfilment took place then, has been in progress ever since, and will continue until the consummation of all things. That the reference is to the final advent of Christ cannot be true. He has come in real ways in the past, as in the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 16 : 28), in his providences (Matt. 27 : 64), in judgments upon the churches (2 : 5, 16). It may also intimate that in God's sight but a short time intervenes between the first and second advent (Ps. 90 : 4). The second part is perhaps spoken by the angel.

**Prophecy.** This is based upon the supposition that the vision had been reduced to writing, as commanded (1 :

11, 19). The visions of this book would have been altogether worthless, after the death of John, had they not been reduced to writing. The term, *prophecy*, means more than prediction; it embraces teaching, counsel, warning. No part of the book is more helpful than the letters to the churches, which have in them little of the predictive element.

We have now, in the two following verses, the testimony of John himself.

8, 9. John bears witness to the reality of the visions which he had seen. At the end of John's Gospel we have the testimony of those who knew the truth of his statements (John 21 : 24).

**Things.** The reference is to the entire series of visions; he bears witness to their reality. He was not simply a conduit through which these flowed; he was conscious of them and their meaning. This testimony would have great weight where John's character was best known. The book of Revelation found a much readier acceptance in the East, where John was widely known, than in the West. **Worship.**

As representing God, perhaps glorious in form. John falls down before the angel. In 19 : 10 he had done this, and been reproved. It may be that John does not repeat this act, but now, at the close, alludes to what he had previously done. Even John was not perfect in conduct or judgment. The worship shows the right heart, the desire to worship God or God's messenger, even if not guided aright by intelligence.

**Fellow-servant.** Compare the corresponding place in 19 : 10. The angels are fellow-servants of God with all believers, and are also attendants upon the saints (Heb. 1 : 14). It is implied that every one loving God will,

prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 <sup>a</sup> And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. <sup>b</sup> He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: <sup>c</sup> and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 <sup>d</sup> And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, <sup>e</sup> to give every man according as his work shall be.

<sup>x</sup> 10 : 4; Hab. 2 : 2, 3. <sup>y</sup> 1 : 3.  
<sup>a</sup> Job 17 : 9; Eph. 5 : 27. <sup>b</sup> Ver. 7, 10.

prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book; worship God.

10 And he says to me, Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; because the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.

12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to each one

<sup>z</sup> Eccl. 11 : 3; Dan. 12 : 10; 2 Tim. 3 : 13.  
<sup>c</sup> 11 : 18; Isa. 40 : 10. <sup>d</sup> 20 : 12; Rom. 2 : 6.

in his appropriate sphere, render service to God. It is taught that no one lower than God must be worshiped; reverence may be given to saints and angels. Men may worship God direct, without anything intervening. The emotions enkindled in John's heart at the sight of the future glory of the church bewildered him for a time, and led him to an attitude toward the messenger befitting only Him who sent him. **Prophets** is used here in the New Testament sense, these acting as God's spokesmen to men, not necessarily foretelling the future (Eph. 2 : 20). **Worship** involves intelligence, reverence, a sense of obligation, a worthiness in the person worshiped. The moral qualities in God, not his almighty-ness, but his holiness and goodness make worship reasonable and morally compulsory. **God.** This is for us a command to worship Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, God in the entirety of his nature.

**10. Seal.** Compare by way of contrast Dan. 12 : 4, 9. Daniel was commanded to seal the book because the vision belonged to days far beyond. The command here reaffirms the declaration of ver. 7, that the coming of Christ, in some way, will occur speedily. It is implied that the nearer the time is the more do the churches need warning and consolation. The book began to be fulfilled at once, the fulfilment will not be complete until there comes a renovated earth.

**11. Unrighteous.** Four classes of persons are here spoken of, two descriptions of the godly, two of the ungodly. Alford thinks there is a solemn irony in these words, like those spoken by Jesus in Matt. 26 : 45, meaning the

time is so short there is hardly time for change. There is everywhere a tendency to fixedness of character, from which one will not desire to escape, where the "will not" becomes changed to the "cannot." The punishment of sin is sin added to itself, as the reward of righteousness is more righteousness. Eternal punishment is not an arbitrary penalty fixed by an almighty being, but a natural sequence of ungodly living. The worst evil that could befall a man would be to be given up by God—to work out his own will (Hosea 4 : 17). These words contain the truth, that the mystery of God's dealings is finished, and that nothing more will be done by him to change their state. If judgment overtake us at the last, the result will be traceable to no arbitrary decree, but to the manner in which, as moral beings, we met the conditions of that moral system in the midst of which we had been placed. Persons are, on the whole, what they decide to be. The foundation of these words is found in Ezek. 20 : 39: "Go ye, serve every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me."

**12-17. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.** As Jesus opened the Apocalypse, it is fitting that he close it. Impressiveness is added to these words, in that they are the final words spoken to men by the ascended Christ.

**12. Reward.** Again he asserts his speedy coming, not empty handed, but with rewards. Even Jesus, in his earthly life, was influenced by the future (Heb. 12 : 2); also the patriarchs (Heb. 11 : 13-16). Jesus speaks these words to encourage believers. (Comp. Isa. 40 : 10.) That there will be gradations in the bestowment of the rewards

- 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. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
- 15 "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.
- 16 according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.
- 14 Happy are they who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loves and does a lie.
- 16 I, Jesus, sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

e 1 : 8, 11; 21 : 6; Isa. 41 : 4; 44 : 6; 48 : 12.

f Ver. 7; Ps. 106 : 3-5; Isa. 56 : 1, 2; Dan. 12 : 12; 1 John 3 : 3, 23, 24.

g Ver. 2; John 1 : 12.

h John 14 : 6; Col. 1 : 12.

i 1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10; Gal. 5 : 19-21; Col. 3 : 6.

k Comp. Deut. 23 : 18.

l 21 : 27.

m Ver. 6; 1 : 1, 11.

n 5 : 5; Isa. 11 : 10.

o 2 : 28; Num. 24 : 17; 2 Peter 1 : 19.

is taught by Jesus in Matt. 25 : 14-29; Luke 19 : 12-27. Salvation is alone through God's mercy, rewards will be given according to character. As on earth there are persons eminent for piety, so in heaven will be persons eminent in their rewards.

**13.** This verse forms a foundation for the preceding statement. The largeness of Christ's person is a reason why he can reward men. **Alpha.** (See 1 : 8, 17; 21 : 6.) In this is the calm assertion of his deity, without beginning or ending; we may therefore rely on his words. The person of Christ furnishes a foundation for his control of affairs, gives assurance to his promises. Such a being cannot be classified among men.

**14. Blessed.** There is asserted here a universal sinfulness, a salvation through the blood of Christ, a participation in that salvation by believing in Christ, the consequent happy condition of the believer. The **right** stands for a righteousness that covers the life. (Comp. Matt. 22 : 11.) Two rights are conferred, the entrance into the city and eternal life secured (7 : 14; 22 : 2).

**15.** Inclusion for the holy means exclusion for the unholy. **Dogs.** Six classes of unholy persons are on the outside. Divine love, holiness, and knowledge united in Christ create this separation. So far as this vision reveals the will of God they remain permanently on the outside. These classes differ in the kinds and grades of sinning, but all sinning at heart is one,

the rejection of God's sovereignty. It is a comfort to the godly that their fellowship will be with the godly alone; it is a fearful outlook for the impenitent that their association must be with moral outcasts. It may be that all the ungodly will, as ages pass, sink lower and lower. God makes heaven; impenitent sinners make their own perdition. In actual life the dogs might be immediately outside the city walls. We may not conceive of intercourse between the holy and unholy in the future life, between them is a great gulf (Luke 16 : 26). The most attractive grandeur of the new Jerusalem is its purity.

**16. Angel.** (See 1 : 1.) This book is eminently worthy of study; it is from Jesus himself. The **churches** meant primarily are the seven churches mentioned in 1 : 11, in reality they are for all Christians in all ages. It is instinctive in Christians, it is a command on the part of Christ, that all Christians should form themselves into churches. The Scriptures are for all. Paul commanded that his letters should be read publicly (1 Thess. 5 : 27). The word, **offspring**, is explanatory of the term, **root**. The expression is not to be understood as asserting his descent from David, and also his lordship over him, as in Matt. 22 : 43. It is to be explained in the light of Isa. 11 : 1, 10. Jesus appeals to Jewish readers as a descendant from the royal stock of David, the Messiah. He also, as **Morning Star**, introduces an eternal

- 17 <sup>p</sup> And the Spirit and <sup>q</sup> the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is <sup>r</sup> athirst come. <sup>s</sup> And whosoever will, <sup>t</sup> 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, <sup>u</sup> If any man shall add unto these things, <sup>v</sup> 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, <sup>w</sup> God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of <sup>x</sup> the holy city, and <sup>y</sup> from the things which are written in this book.
- 20 He which testifieth these things saith, <sup>z</sup> Surely I come quickly.
- 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that thirsts, come; let him that will, take the water of life freely.
- 18 I testify to every one that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any one shall add to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any one shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written of in this book.
- 20 He who testifies these things, says,

<sup>p</sup> John 16:7-15. <sup>q</sup> 19:7; 21:2, 9.

<sup>r</sup> Isa. 2:3; Jer. 50:5.

<sup>s</sup> Isa. 55:1; John 7:37.

<sup>t</sup> John 6:37.

<sup>u</sup> John 4:10, 14.

<sup>v</sup> Deut. 4:2.

<sup>w</sup> 14:10, 11; 19:20.

<sup>x</sup> 13:8; Ps. 69:28.

<sup>y</sup> 21:2, 10; Isa. 52:1.

<sup>z</sup> Ver. 7, 12.

day in which there shall be no night.  
(See 2:28; 2 Sam. 23:4.)

**17.** There seems to be a twofold meaning to the **Come** of this verse. The Holy Spirit (1:4) working in the church, and the church itself, the bride of Christ, unite in praying to the glorious and glorified Christ to come, as in ver. 20. The one who hears the message must also join in the appeal. This coming does not awaken fear, as in 6:16, but supreme joy. **Athirst.** This appeal may be to believers alone to satisfy all their longings. There may be a thirst even in heaven for larger and fuller displays of God's nature and work (7:16, 17). Some regard this as the last tender invitation of Christ to accept himself as Saviour. **Freely.** If men are not saved and satisfied, it is not because God keeps them away from the springs.

**18-21. JOHN'S FINAL WORDS.** These are words of warning. God punished men for touching the ark (2 Sam. 6:7); for entering the holy place unbidden (2 Chron. 26:19); for resisting constituted authorities (Num. 16:33). Paul guarded the Scriptures from alterations, by precautions (2 Thess. 2:17). He declared that many were corrupting the Scriptures (2 Cor. 2:17). John, in closing the book, wishes to guard it inviolate.

**18, 19.** He regards the book as a part of the holy Scriptures. One may **add** to the words by giving equal weight to tradition or to writings that

have no apostolic authority. The reference is solely to this book, though the principle applies to all the inspired writings. Many writings, in the early centuries, were palmed off upon the churches under false pretense. To **take away** is to deny its divine origin, to weaken its testimony, to interpret it in ways that remove its fundamental teachings. The book may be disparaged and neglected. A fearful penalty is pronounced. Has it always followed that persons who have denied the authority of the book, who have regarded it as a book of fantastic stories—have they always been punished? It cannot be so affirmed. It remains true that if a person should defy God by wilfully tampering with his word, if a church should cover up God's saving truths, fearful effects would, of necessity, follow in time. (Comp. Deut. 4:2; 12:32.) In Gal. 1:8, 9 Paul puts an anathema upon the one who should corrupt the doctrine of faith. The Scriptures alone constitute the law for the church, to be obeyed, not altered. Good people have mistakenly added features, such as infant baptism, which nullify the teachings of Christ.

**20. Testifieth.** The reference is to Jesus Christ himself. **Quickly.** He began to come in that age, and has ever since been coming through his providences. He will continue to come until he is the acknowledged King of all the earth. To his assertion, the

Amen. <sup>c</sup> Even so, come, Lord Jesus.  
 21 <sup>d</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
 be with you all. Amen.

Yea, I come quickly. Amen; come,  
 Lord Jesus.  
 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with  
 the saints.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. 42:1; Song of Sol. 8:14; Heb. 9:28; 2 Peter 3:12-14.  
<sup>d</sup> 1:4; Rom. 1:7; 16:20, 24; Eph. 6:23, 24; 2 Thess. 3:18.

church lifts up her head to the skies and says, as in ver. 17, **Come**. His coming is the source of her joy and help; it is the glorious coming of the bridegroom long waited for.

21. The book opens with a gracious benediction in 1:4; it closes with the same. "An ending of this kind is unusual in Apocalypses, as Bousset points out; but it is suitable to an Apocalypse which is also a letter to the churches (1:4, note), designed to be read in the congregation. An Apocalypse in its inner character, a prophecy in its purpose, the book is, in its literary form, an epistle, and therefore begins and ends with the epistolary forms familiar to the Asian churches through the Epistles of St. Paul" (SWETE). John's tender heart reveals what is in the heart of the Lord Jesus, love for the saints. They were real saints, though imperfect. John, and those in that age suffering tribulation (1:9), have long since been dwelling with the Lord. In all the storms and judgments that John sees coming on the world, where the beast and false prophet dwell, even here John prays that the people of God may dwell in peace and safety. In days when there have been many attacks on the historical character of New Testament books, it is comforting to know that sound scholarship puts a firm foundation under the church's accepted beliefs. Dr. C. R. Gregory, in his "Introduction to the New Testament," says: "No one can be blamed if he quietly holds to the genuineness of 2 Peter, and it is agreeable to hold to the old tradition of the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, and there is no more acceptable author of the Fourth Gospel and of Revelation than the Apostle John."

UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB, BE THE BLESSING, AND THE HONOR, AND THE GLORY, AND THE DOMINION, FOREVER AND EVER.

#### PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The source of all life, physical, intellectual, spiritual, is found in God alone through Christ. The joys of sin are like a deceiving mirage, the joys of God are like an enlarging river (ver. 1).

2. Even in heaven the spiritual life needs nourishment. It is not full grown nor self-supporting. Nourishment is constant, there is no month without fruit (ver. 2).

3. The accursed things are outside of heaven, the blessed things inside. The service of all created holy beings will be not drudgery or enforced work, but a delight and privilege (ver. 3).

4. Christians are even now heirs to a kingdom; in heaven they will be kings and priests. The ungodly may own the present, the Christian owns the future (ver. 5).

5. In the New Testament we have not only honest and competent writers, but back of them are the Holy Spirit and the assurance of Jesus (ver. 6).

6. Hearing without heeding brings a curse. Hearing and obeying are the only way to a blessing (ver. 7).

7. Worship is instinctive. The kind of being we worship will have its inevitable effect on us. The worship of a holy God should make us holy (ver. 8).

8. We may reverence men and angels, but we may worship no one lower than God. When saints and angels come between men and God, they obscure God and hurt the worshiper (ver. 9).

9. Delays often work ill to the heart. Punishment delayed often becomes an occasion for license. God's delays are for good, penalties and rewards will come in time (ver. 10).

10. There will come a time when character will be fixed, when change will be morally impossible. Every year tends toward this condition. Life is the time when the issues of eternity are decided (ver. 11).

11. Jesus encourages his people with the assurance of rewards. Men should serve Christ moved by love and duty (ver. 12).

12. Securing Christ we secure all blessedness. Wisdom, goodness, and power are all joined in Christ (ver. 13).

13. Men are saved, not by culture or training, but only through the renewing and cleansing influence of the Holy Spirit. The cleansing comes first, heaven comes next (ver. 14).

14. The eternal exclusion of the ungodly from heaven is the testimony of Jesus. Men may dislike, or doubt, or deny the doctrine of eternal punishment. Not what we like, but what Jesus teaches will decide this question (ver. 15).

15. The words of Jesus do not lose their

vitality through the centuries. Jesus is as much concerned to-day for the salvation of men and the upbuilding of his people as when on the earth (ver. 16).

16. The coming of Christ will be a source of alarm to the ungodly, a source of delight to the believer. What effect the coming of Christ will have is a test of the heart (ver. 17).

17. To alter the Scriptures is to usurp the authority and place of Christ. It is ours to listen, not to explain away. We must bring to the Bible an open mind and an obedient spirit (ver. 18).

18. To obey the Scriptures that we like, to disobey what we do not like is, in reality, to make a new Bible. All the Bible is for every one for all the life, to be believed and obeyed (ver. 19).



# APPENDIX

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## THE MEANING OF BABYLON (CHAPTER XVII)

Babylon was one of the world's great cities, opposed to God's people, destroying Jerusalem, and taking the nation into captivity. Jeremiah predicted the fall of this city (<sup>chap.</sup> 50). It fell, no more to rise. It was a city glorious in its outward aspect, but greedy, corrupt, against which God set his face. It is not strange that this New Testament book, constructed so largely on the Old Testament plan and using Old Testament imagery, should introduce Babylon as the picture of a leading foe of Christ and his cause. And yet it is not placed before us as a purely heathenish power like the pagan Roman Empire. Rather it is the portrait of a degenerate church. In chap. XVIII we beheld an impure woman, representing a church that had lost its purity, as in chap. XII we had a beautiful woman, clothed in a sublime way, representing God's cause on the earth. The woman is not changed into a harlot, for that would assert the destruction of God's cause on the earth. There is always a spiritual element—the real church of Christ. There is also a seeming church, antichristian in nature, represented by the unclean woman. We are told distinctly in 17 : 18 that the unclean woman and the great city present the same thought in a twofold form. The dragon, the beast, the false prophet, are open satanic foes of Christ; this foe is the more dangerous because it is nominally Christian, having a seeming relation to Christ, though it rides upon the beast and makes use of it to do her will.

It is worthy of notice that the unclean woman, the mighty city, is destroyed in the vision before the three other enemies of Christ. There is a heartier rejoicing over the downfall of Babylon than over the destruction of the others (18 : 20). The forces and agencies employed by God to do his work are mainly spiritual; only by the operations of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men can a spiritual Babylon be destroyed. Revivals of religion, the spread of intelligence, the knowledge of the Bible, these are the agencies by which the walls of a mystical Babylon can be made to fall. The figures of the burning city, and the casting of the stone into the sea, must not mislead us into thinking that in outward convulsions alone or mainly the kingdom of evil can be overthrown. The very nature of the conflict calls for spiritual agencies. Elijah was taught that the great forces of God for overturning the kingdom of darkness work quietly; the Reformation, springing from the study of the Bible, was more effective than the French Revolution in ushering in God's kingdom. If all in the world were changed in heart Babylon would at once be destroyed.

We may not think this destruction will come suddenly. Neither Babylon nor Tyre fell suddenly, as the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, might seem to demand. Babylon survived its first blow, rallied, and stood a mighty city until the age of Alexander, two hundred years afterward; then it went down with a steady decline, and the prophecy was fulfilled. In like manner Tyre fell before the arms of Nebuchadnezzar, but rallied and rose to great splendor. More than two centuries passed away before the utter desolation foretold came to pass. We see, from the history of these cities, that the prophecies did not mean that they would be suddenly engulfed as if by an earthquake.

A spiritual degeneracy, such as is here portrayed, is assuredly possible. Jesus announced a growing coldness on the part of his disciples (*Matt. 24:12*). In the days of the apostles rank errors came in; the New Testament letters reveal a constant struggle to keep the faith of the churches pure. This book, revealing the life of the churches at the close of the first century, shows uncleanness permitted in the churches, and lax motives of the Christian life itself (*2:20*). In some ages of the Christian era the truth was seemingly held only by the small and almost unknown bodies charged with heresy by the ruling powers. In the nominal church of to-day there is a large Babylonian element. The State churches in Germany and elsewhere, with their baptismal regeneration, their teaching that citizenship in the State involves membership in the church—this is an essential part of an antichristian system. The darkness in the Greek and Oriental organizations is as dense as that of the Romish churches. These facts show that a spiritual Babylon may exist side by side with a holy Jerusalem, representing Christ's own kingdom.

A great practical wrong has been done in limiting the term Babylon to the Romish Church. It has always maintained many fundamental revealed truths as against atheism, infidelity, deism, unitarianism, agnosticism. Fairbairn says concerning Rome: "It has in it the essential elements of the antichristian apostasy, worldliness of spirit, corruption of doctrine, licentiousness of manners, hatred and oppression of the truth, the queenlike elevation of Babylonish pride and security, the presence of the blood of martyrs." But this term means more than the Romish or Eastern Church; wherever in Protestantism the world's favor rather than Christ's favor is sought, there is the spirit that makes Babylon. The fulfilment of this prophecy lies in the future. It does not refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, nor to Rome falling under the power of the barbarians, nor to any literal city that will grow up heading a movement against Christ; nor to the destruction of the political supremacy of the pope in 1870.

Alford, who holds that Babylon is practically Rome, that Rome represents the Romish Church, finds a difficulty in the commercial character ascribed to Babylon. He does not know how to find this fulfilled in the case of Rome, which was not a great commercial city. But he misapprehends entirely the meaning of John's vision. If Babylon had no commerce such figures might have been used concerning it to show, through figures, that it was a great city. John is not describing a literal city or writing a history of Babylon. This book

will be profitable to us, and speak truly to us, when we remember that it must not, at all, be considered a book of history dealing in definite statements concerning persons, places, times. Babylon may give suggestions of Rome, papal or pagan, but in its fulfilment it means vastly more. Compare note page 255: "The figurative interpretation of Revelation alone satisfactory."

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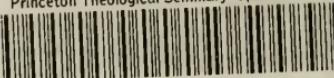
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