

Revelation - Commentaries by Stanley Bruce Anstey

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 10:1-11:14: A Parenthesis (11:1-14)

Between the 6th and 7th Trumpets

Chapters 10:1-11:14

Since the judgments that have fallen thus far have brought us to the moment when Christ will personally appear out of heaven in judgment (as indicated in the sounding of the seventh trumpet – Rev. 11:15-18), further details as to this monumental event are now given to us in a parenthesis. This parenthesis consists of two subjects.

The Mystery of God Being Finished

(Chap. 10:1-11)

The first is the declaration of “the mystery of God,” which involves the question as to why God has allowed evil to continue on earth unchecked. This mystery is now about to be finished by Christ (the “mighty Angel”) publicly intervening to claim His inheritance according to the prophecies of “the little book.” The contents of the little book are the sum of the prophecies of the Old Testament which promise that Israel’s Messiah will come and reign in a worldwide kingdom (Isa. 32:1; Psa. 45:1-5; Psa. 72; Zech. 14:9, etc.). These Scriptures that pertain to the coming of the Messiah are called “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). The act of setting His foot on “the sea” and “the earth” is a picture of Christ asserting His rights to His inheritance, which is every created thing (Psa. 24:1; 95:5). This is an answer to Psalm 2:8-9.

The moment Christ publicly intervenes in judgment “the mystery of iniquity”—which is the working of “lawlessness” among men in opposition to the will of God in all things divine and secular—will be brought to a close. It is something that has been going on since the apostles’ day, and has continued to grow and will reach its culmination in the apostasy of “the man of sin”—the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:6-8). God has put a restraint on the progress of evil today through two restrainers which He has set on earth to curtail its progress. The Apostle Paul defines these as:

- “That which restrains” (2 Thess. 2:6).
- “He who restrains” (2 Thess. 2:7).

“That which restrains” refers to the principle of law and order in human government which God put in man’s hand to exercise after the flood (Gen. 9:5-6; Eccl. 5:8; Rom. 13:1-7). J. N. Darby said, “‘That which hinders’ therefore, is the power of God acting in government here below as authorized by Him. The grossest abuse of power still bears this last character. Christ could say to Pilate, ‘Thou couldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above.’ Wicked as he might be, his power is owned as coming from God” (Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, on 2 Thessalonians 2). He also said, “‘That which restrains’ in the Greek means a thing. What is it? God has not told us what it is, and this, doubtless, because the thing which restrained then is not that which restrains now. Then it was, in one sense, the Roman Empire, as the fathers thought; who saw in the power of the Roman Empire a hindrance to the revelation of the man of sin, and thus prayed for the prosperity of that empire. At present the hindrance is the existence of the governments established by God in the world” (Collected Writings, vol. 27, pp. 302-303).

The second Restrainer is “He who restrains” (2 Thess. 2:7). This refers to a divine Person—the Holy Spirit residing on earth in the Church—acting to restrain evil in various spheres. The Apostle Paul says that the Spirit will restrain “until He be taken out of the way [be gone].” Thus, there will be a time when the Holy Spirit will no longer reside on earth. Presently, the Spirit dwells in the Church, but when the Church is called away from the earth at the Rapture, the Spirit will be “gone” from the earth at that time as well, for He dwells in the Church “forever” (John 14:16). This does not mean that the Spirit will cease to work on earth. He will continue to work here, but it will be from heaven as He did in Old Testament times.

After the Rapture, evil will flow on at an accelerated pace, because the governments in the West will apostatize and the Spirit of God will no longer be residing on the earth to restrain evil. However, the working of evil will be halted abruptly at the Appearing of Christ, which is the point before us in Revelation 10.

An Adequate Witness Will Be Maintained in Jerusalem

(Chap. 11:1-14)

The second part of this parenthesis indicates that the Appearing of Christ will also be the time of the Jews’ deliverance and the nation’s blessing. And while they wait for it, God will use them in testimony during the Great Tribulation.

Vss. 1-2—The “Angel” (in the KJV) who speaks to John here is the same Angel mentioned in chapter 10:1, for the subject is connected with the word “and.” It is the Lord Himself. This is clear from verse 3—“I will give power to My two witnesses....” This could only be the Lord speaking. John is given a “rod” and is told to “measure” three things: “the temple of God,” “the altar,” and “them that worship therein.” As a rule in Scripture, when God measures something, it is a sign that He is about to take up with it with blessing in mind (Jer. 31:39; Zech. 2:1-5; Ezek. 40-43). Measurement also implies that He knows and cares for that which He measures.

- “The temple of God”—signifies His dwelling place.
- “The altar”—signifies approach to God on the ground of a sacrifice.
- “Them that worship therein”—signifies the Jewish remnant.

Putting these three things together, we learn that at the time of the great apostasy, which will result from the Antichrist’s delusions, God will have a company of Jews (the remnant) that will remain faithful and will draw near into His presence in worship and prayer.

The “court” in the temple is where the mass of the people stood outside the sanctuary (Luke 1:10, 22); it signifies the mass of the Jews in that coming day. It is not measured because these Jews will be faithless and apostate. They will have received the Antichrist and believed his lie, and thus will worship the image of the Beast. They most surely will not be taken up for blessing, but rather, given over “to the nations” (the western confederacy under the Beast) who will have control of “the holy city” Jerusalem and the land of Israel during the latter half of the coming prophetic week. Thus, the apostate mass of the Jews will be trodden “under foot” and will exist as captives and bond-servants in the empire of the Beast during that time. They will do his bidding in intensifying the persecution of their brethren—the faithful Jewish remnant.

Vs. 3—Regardless of how dark things will get in the Great Tribulation, when the lie of the Antichrist will deceive the western world and the apostate Jews in the land of Israel, God will maintain an adequate witness for Himself signified in “the two witnesses.” (“Two” is the number of adequate witness in Scripture – John 8:17; Deuteronomy 19:15.) These witnesses are not two literal persons, as many have thought. Rather, they symbolize a small but adequate portion of the Jewish remnant that will remain in the city of Jerusalem (where the Antichrist will reign) to witness for God in the face of the great apostasy. This portion of the Jewish remnant will be miraculously empowered by God for this special testimony. (The rest of the remnant will flee to the mountains for safety – Matt. 24:16.)

F. B. Hole said, “The question naturally arises; are we to understand these verses as predicting the rise of two actual men, or is it rather that God raises up and maintains, for as long as it suits Him, a sufficient and powerful testimony having the characteristics of both Elijah and Moses? We incline to the latter view and that especially because of the symbolic character of the whole book. We think then that they indicate—not a large and abundant testimony; that would be indicated by three and not two—a sufficient testimony, divinely, indeed miraculously, preserved and sustained at this epoch” (The Revelation, p. 247).

W. Scott said, “On the question of the number of witnesses conjectures innumerable have been advanced, such as the two Testaments, the Law and the Gospel, Huss and Jerome, the Waldenses and the Albigenses, etc. Others with more show of reason, and with an apparent sanction of Scripture, suppose that Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses, quoting Malachi 4:5 in proof of their contention. ‘Remember ye the Law of Moses My servant’ (v. 4) would not imply a personal presence of the great lawgiver in the scenes of the last days; whereas verse 5 does seem a very express declaration that the distinguished prophet has again to reappear in Palestine: ‘Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.’ A full and adequate testimony is the thought purposely intended in the number of the witnesses. It seems to us that a larger number than actually two is called for in the solemn crisis before us, also that verse eight supposes a company of slain witnesses” (The Book of Revelation, p. 230).

The question was submitted to the editor of Help and Food magazine: “Ques. — Will you kindly explain the meaning of the ‘two witnesses’ of Rev. 11:3? Ans. — We believe they are the faithful Jewish remnant during the second half of Daniel’s last week—the time of the Great Tribulation. The number two is not necessarily literal, but denotes an adequate testimony, even as the Law required....Like Moses and Elias, whose testimony was under similar circumstances, and is analogous to theirs, they have with it, power against their enemies, though the King being yet away, they are in reproach and suffering” (Help and Food, vol. 19, p. 252).

Vss. 4-6—These “two olive trees” and “two candlesticks” will prophesy for “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (1260 days) in the spirit of mourning (“sackcloth”). This is 18 days short of “forty and two months” (1278 days), which is the end of the prophetic week when the Lord will Appear. This shows that God in mercy will cut short the days of their suffering, because the intensity of the persecution against his elect will be so great (Matt. 24:22). Hence, the Great Tribulation caused by the Beast and the Antichrist will carry on for 1260 days. It is not mentioned here, but this great persecution will be stopped by the inroads of the King of the North and his Arab confederacy (Dan. 11:40-42; Psa. 83). They will enter the land from the north and slaughter the apostate Jews—the persecutors of the remnant. This could be as many as ten million apostate Jews killed in a few days (Zech. 13:8), after which the Appearing of Christ will occur.

Vss. 7-14—When the “testimony” of the two witnesses is finished they will be slain and then caught up to heaven in the last phase of the first resurrection (chap. 14:13). The “remnant” mentioned in verse 13 is not the God-fearing remnant of Jews, but simply the rest of the people in the city who were not killed by the earthquake. These are guilty, unrepentant, apostate Jews who wish that God would turn away from them. They give “glory to the God of heaven,” not in the sense of worship from their hearts, but as being forced to acknowledge that it has been His hand that has caused it to happen.

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 11:15-18: Trumpet Judgments Resumed (11:15-18)

The Seventh Trumpet

(Chap. 11:15-18)

Christ at last appears out of heaven in judgment (1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14; 5:2; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14-15, etc.). “The kingdom of the world of our Lord and His Christ is come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages.” Thus, a one-world government, which men have dreamed of having but have never been able to accomplish, will at last be established on earth under the Lord Jesus Christ. This kingdom will last a thousand years—to the end of time (Rev. 20:4).

We have seen in the fifth trumpet-judgment, an invasion of demonic forces working to delude the Jews in the land of Israel; and in the sixth trumpet-judgment, we have seen an invasion of crazed Islamic soldiers invade and destroy the mass of the Jews in their land. Now in this seventh trumpet-judgment, we have an invasion of glorified saints accompanying the Lord as He comes out of heaven at His Appearing to judge this world in righteousness (Rev. 19:14; Acts 17:31). The nations from both the East and the West will respond to this heavenly intervention in an all out war—Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16), at which time the Lord will judge them all and set up His kingdom, and it will continue to the Great White Throne judgment at the end of time.

(The thread of events from the Appearing of Christ forward is resumed in chapter 19:11).

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 16:15: A Parenthesis (16:15)

Between the 6th and 7th Vials

(Chapter 16:15)

Since the prophecies thus far in this section have brought us to the moment when judgment will be poured out on the assembled armies in the land of Israel, another parenthesis is opened to explain who will execute the judgment—and when. It will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will judge these armies at His Appearing. His personal voice is now heard, “Behold, I come as a thief” (vs. 15).

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 16:16-21: Vial Judgments Resumed (16:16-21)

The Seventh Vial

(Chap. 16:16-21)

Christ’s first act in judgment at His Appearing will be on the Western powers under the (personal) Beast as his massive navy comes to the land of Israel from the west (Num. 24:24). This judgment is described under the figure of “the great city” of “Babylon” being overthrown and destroyed. The overthrow of Babylon in history by Cyrus the Persian is a picture of this judgment. Cyrus is a type of Christ and Babylon is a type of the Western powers under the personal beast (Isa. 44:28). The first thing that Cyrus did after he defeated the Babylonians was grant deliverance to the Jews who were captive in Babylon (Isa. 45:1-4). This is exactly what the Lord will do when He appears. He will judge the western powers and deliver the faithful Jewish remnant from the persecution leveled at them.

(Christ’s Appearing in judgment is described in further detail when the thread of events is resumed in chapter 19:11).

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 19:11-21:8: The Consummation of the Age, the Millennium, and the Eternal State (21:1-8)

(Chapter 19:11-21:8)

The prophecies thus far in the book have taken us up to the Appearing of Christ. Things have been developed from three different standpoints, each ending at the point of His coming in judgment (chap. 11:15-18; 14:14-20; 16:15-21). This closing section of the book picks up the thread of things from that moment and takes us from the Appearing of Christ, through the Millennium, to the Eternal State.

Eight Great Visions

There are eight great visions in this section indicated by the words, “I saw ... ” (chap. 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11, 12; 21:1). These visions are of consecutive order, stretching from the Appearing of Christ to the Eternal State.

The First Vision—Christ the Victorious Conqueror

Chap. 19:11-16—The thread of prophetic events is now resumed with a detailed account of the Appearing of Christ. The heavens are “opened” because the moment of Christ’s Appearing has come. This is quite different from chapter 4:1 where a door in heaven was opened for John to pass in; here it is opened for Christ and the armies of heaven to come out. The Lord Jesus said that no one knows the exact hour when this will be (Matt. 24:36). The sovereignty of the earth is really the great thing at stake, and it will be decided once and for all at this time. The result is that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). This is the Lord’s Davidic (warrior) character of judgment.

- He rides a “white horse.” This is not literal, but symbolic of His victorious power (vs. 11a). In ancient eastern countries when a king came to a place on an ass, it meant he was coming in peace (Zech. 9:9), but when he came on a horse, it was in war. This Rider must not to be confused with the rider on a “white horse” in chapter 6:1-2, which is papal Rome professing purity of motive in gathering the nations of western Europe together into a federation.
- He is called “Faithful and True” because He judges in righteousness and according to the truth (vs. 11b).

- His eyes are “a flame of fire,” meaning that He has divine omniscience that searches out all hidden evil and deals with it according to righteousness (vs. 12a).
- He wears “many crowns [diadems]” referring to the universal dominion that belongs to Him (vs. 12b).
- Having a “name written, that no man knew” speaks of the intrinsic glory of His person that no human can know (vs. 12c; Matt. 11:27).
- He is clothed with “a vesture dipped in blood” meaning that He comes in vengeance (vs. 13a). The blood here is not His blood that was shed for sinners, but the blood of His enemies (Compare Isa. 34:6; 63:1-4).
- His name is “the Word of God” because He is the perfect exponent of the mind of God as expressed in judgment (vs. 13b; John 1:1).
- The “armies” of heaven that follow Him are the glorified heavenly saints from Old Testament and New Testament times who will attend His coming (vs. 14; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14; Jude 14; Zech. 14:5; Rev. 17:14). They have no weapons because they don’t need any; the battle is the Lord’s.
- Out of His mouth goes “a sharp sword” (vs. 15). Thus, His Word will be the instrument of His enemies’ destruction (Heb. 4:12; Isa. 30:31). The purpose of His coming in judgment is twofold: firstly, to “smite the nations ... with a rod of iron” which assemble at Armageddon—the Harvest judgment. Secondly, to tread “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”—the Vintage judgment (Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 14:18-20). (This latter judgment is not mentioned here because the Spirit of God is focusing on Christ’s Appearing, and the Vintage does not happen then, but sometime later.)
- His name (or title) is “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (vs. 16). This indicates His sovereign right to rule over all kingdoms.

The Second Vision—the Summoning of the Ravenous Birds of Prey to the Supper of God

Chap. 19:17-18—So sure is the judgment of the armies that gather to oppose the intervention of Christ that an angel summons “all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven” to feed on the fallen warriors. This is the second “supper” in this chapter. “The marriage supper of the Lamb” is a scene of joy and blessing in heaven; “the supper of the great God” is a scene of judgment on earth. This supper is of the dead who have fallen in battle (vss. 17-18).

The Third Vision—the Judgment at Armageddon

Chap. 19:19-21—The judgment the Lord will execute at this time is the first in a series of judgments. When He appears, He will first deal with the Western powers at Armageddon. These are the confederate armies under the Beast (political Babylon) who will come to the land of Israel from the west with their massive navy (Num. 24:24). At the same time, the Lord will dispatch His angels who will go through the prophetic earth and take out all who have rejected the gospel and cast them into Hell (Matt. 13:38-43; 24:40-41). This is the Harvest judgment.

Vss. 20-21—There is no account of the battles at Armageddon given here, just the result. The Beast (the leader of the Western confederacy) is taken with the Antichrist and cast alive into the lake of fire. The Antichrist is not called “another beast” or “the king,” but “the false prophet,” because at this point he will be reduced to that role, having lost his place of rule in the land of Israel as king. Prior to this, he will have fled from his post in the land when the King of the North and His Arab confederacy attacked (Zech. 11:17; Isa. 22:19; Jer. 39:4; John 10:13).

The Fourth Vision—Satan Bound for 1000 Years (the Millennium)

Chap. 20:1-3—It is God’s desire to display the glory of Christ through the Church in the very place where He was rejected and cast out, and thus vindicate Him before the eyes of all (Matt. 17:1-2; John 17:23; 2 Thess. 1:10). He will do this in the Millennium—the 1000-year reign of Christ. However, the whole scene must be cleansed before the stage can be set for the display of His kingdom glory. As we have seen in the previous chapters, this cleansing will be through judgment. Having judged His enemies, the Lord will make “wars to cease” (Psa. 46:6-9; Isa. 2:4).

If peace and blessing is to be had on earth, Satan, who is the great instigator of violence and corruption, must be removed. The final act of preparing the scene for the display of Christ’s glory will be to cast him and his angels into “the bottomless pit [abyss].” They will remain there “for many days”—the duration of the Millennium (Isa. 24:21-22). The earth will be free of his influence for 1000 years! This is something the world has never known.

The sphere of Satan’s movements will continually be restricted, until at last he will be thrown into the lake of fire (Hell). He once had the privilege of being in “the garden of God” (the abode of God), but when he sinned, he was expelled (Ezek. 28:11-19). Being cast out, he has had the run of the heavens and the earth, which he has sought to corrupt (Job 1:6-7; 15:15). At the time of the flood, some of his emissaries were confined in the pit on account of their particular wickedness of attempting to co-habit with the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2; 2 Peter 2:5; Jude 6). Then, in the middle of the coming prophetic week of Daniel, he will be cast out of the heavens “into the earth” (Rev. 12:7-9; Luke 10:18). When Christ appears at the end of the prophetic week, Satan and his angels will be cast into “the bottomless pit [abyss]” for 1000 years. Then, after his last revolt (having been let out of the pit after 1000 years), he will be cast into “the lake of fire”—his eternal abode of everlasting judgment (Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41).

The Fifth Vision—the Heavenly Saints Reign With Christ for 1000 Years (the Millennium)

Chap. 20:4-10—After all hostile powers are put down, Christ will reign over all the works of His hands with the heavenly saints (Rev. 20:4-6). Scripture tells us that God has “appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained” (Acts 17:31). This “day” is not a single day of 24 hours but the whole period of 1000 years—the Millennium. It is “the day of the Lord” (2 Peter 3:8-10; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; Isa. 2:10-22; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 2:2; Mal. 4:5). The Harvest and Vintage judgments prior to this are

the Lord's Davidic warrior judgments, but this is His Solomonic reign in peace (1 Kings 5:4; Psa. 72:7-8; Psa. 147:14; Isa. 60:18).

A summary is given of those who will be privileged to share in Christ's reign of righteousness. There are three classes of heavenly saints who will sit on "thrones" in the administration of the kingdom. These thrones are in the heavens, not on earth (Dan. 7:22, 27 JND – "the saints of the high [places]"). Thus, the saints will assist in the judgment of the world to come (1 Cor. 6:2):

- "They sat upon them" are the glorified saints from New and Old Testament times (vs. 4a).
- "The souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God" are the martyrs from the first half of the prophetic week who will be raised and glorified (Rev. 6:9-11).
- Those who "had not worshipped the Beast, neither his image" are the martyrs from the last half of the prophetic week who will also be raised and glorified (Rev. 14:2-3; 15:2-4).

Chap. 20:7-10—At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be "loosed out of his prison." Immediately he will make one final, desperate attempt to regain mastery over the world. He will go out and "deceive" those who are lost, and they will follow him in an all-out attempt to overthrow the saints in "the beloved city." This is the last siege of Jerusalem. Those who follow him are called "Gog and Magog," but they are not the same people as in Ezekiel 38-39. Those who follow Satan at this time are called that because they have the same godless character of unbelief. God will use this event to bring Satan and all who follow him to their final end. "Fire" (a symbol of judgment) will come down from God and devour them. Satan will be cast into the lake of fire—his eternal abode of judgment.

The Sixth Vision—the Great White Throne

Chap. 20:11—The sixth vision is of "a great white throne" and "Him" who sits on it. Hence, the Millennium begins and ends with a sessional judgment (vss. 4, 12-15). Who is the occupant of this throne? It is not God the Father, but God the Son, for all judgment has been committed into His hand (John 5:22).

The Seventh Vision—the Judgment of the Wicked Dead

Chap. 20:12-13—This final scene of judgment is that of the wicked dead. The last recorded act in time is the judgment of those who follow Satan in his final revolt; the first recorded act in eternity is the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead. Between these two events the "earth and heaven" will flee away from the "face" of Him who sits on the throne. They actually happen at the same time. At this point, the melting of the elements of the whole creation will take place (2 Peter 3:7-12). This will not include the abode of God ("the third heaven") for the fires of purification cannot touch it.

There will not be a universal resurrection of all men. Scripture indicates that there are two resurrections: a "resurrection of life," and a "resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). This chapter calls the resurrection of life "the first resurrection" (vs. 5). It involves the righteous only. The fact that it says, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," indicates that there is another resurrection after the first resurrection—and it involves the wicked. Hence, it could be called, "the second resurrection."

The wicked dead from the beginning of time will be raised to receive their eternal sentence of judgment. They will stand there suspended in space before their Creator and will be sentenced to a lost eternity in "the lake of fire"—Hell (Job 14:12). Contrary to popular teaching, there is no one in Hell (the lake of fire) yet. Those who have died in their sins are presently in "prison" in Hades (1 Peter 3:19), which is a temporary state of confinement for disembodied spirits who are lost. The first persons cast into Hell (the lake of fire) are the Beast and the Antichrist, then all those who have rejected the gospel of the grace of God in the Western nations will be put there by the angels (the Harvest judgment). The wicked dead are the last to be consigned there. Since these people will be raised from the dead to stand before the great white throne, they will be cast into the lake of fire alive (spirit, soul, and body) and will suffer in endless separation from God.

All who are not found written in "the book of life" are judged according to their works, as recorded in "the books." The fact that there are books indicates that God keeps records of men's lives. Every thought, word, and deed is recorded there. Luke 12:47-48 indicates that there will be varying degrees of punishment for the lost in Hell. It will be a just judgment, and they will be punished "according to their works." No one will suffer for something he or she didn't do.

Chap. 20:14-15—"Death and Hades" are personified as powers, and are cast into the lake of fire in everlasting defeat. Both have come into existence because man sinned, but now there will be no further need of them. "The lake of fire" is the eternal depository of the lost where they will suffer. A "lake" denotes a place of confinement; water flows into it from various creeks and rivers and is confined there. "Fire" is a symbol of judgment throughout Scripture. Hence, the lost are in a place of eternal confinement under the judgment of God. God never intended that any person should end up in that awful place of judgment; it was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). But wicked men who refuse the movements of God's love and grace toward them will also end up there.

The fact that this judgment of wicked persons is called "the second death" shows that they did not cease to exist when they experienced the first death (physical death). If there was nothing left of them after they die, as some falsely teach, then they couldn't experience this judgment. Some think that "everlasting destruction" (2 Thess. 1:9; Phil. 3:19; Matt. 7:13; 2 Peter 2:1, 12; 3:16, etc.) means that people are consumed by the fire of God's judgment and they cease to exist thereafter. This false doctrine is called Annihilationism. God's Word, however, indicates that "everlasting destruction" has not to do with the loss of one's being, but the loss of his well-being.

It is clear from Job 30:24 that the lost still exist after they die. It says that they "cry" out even after they have been destroyed. Revelation 19:20 tells us that the Beast and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire. Then, in chapter 20 we are told that the devil is put into the bottomless pit for the duration of the Millennium and then let loose. And after a brief rebellion we read, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are" (Rev. 20:10). Notice: the Beast and the false prophet were still there in the lake of fire after the thousand-year reign of Christ! They didn't cease to exist. The Lord Jesus said,

“He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “Abideth” is an on-going thing. If the wrath of God abides on the unbeliever, there must be the existence of the unbeliever for it to abide on him. Again, it says in Revelation 14:11, “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” Torment signifies a condition that requires a living person to endure it. You cannot torment what does not exist. The Lord also said, “Their worm dieth not” (Mark 9:48). This indicates that the torments of a guilty conscience will not die in the lost under eternal punishment. Moreover, a number of Scriptures tell us that the fire of God’s judgment “never shall be quenched” (Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:43, 45; Luke 3:17). What need would there be for it to continue if those who are cast there are annihilated immediately? Some tell us that death itself is the judgment. But Scripture says, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this (death) the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). If, “after” death is the judgment, how could death be the judgment?

Even in our ordinary language, “destruction” doesn’t mean the cessation of existence. For instance, if we took an axe and destroyed a beautiful wooden table, there would be just as much material lying in a useless heap on the floor as when it sat as a beautiful, useful table. Once it has been destroyed, it is no longer useful for the purpose for which it was made. It is the same with the destruction of human beings. Man was made for the glory of God (Isa. 43:21; Rev. 4:11). If he goes into “everlasting destruction,” he can no longer be fitted through salvation for the purpose for which he was created.

The Eighth Vision—the Eternal State

Chap. 21:1-8—The final vision is the Eternal State, which is the summit of God’s holy desires in the fullest sense. This brings us to the end of all God’s purposes in regard to the glory of Christ and the blessing of man. There is relatively little given to us in Scripture about the Eternal State. There are really only three main passages that speak of it (Rev. 21:1-8; 2 Peter 3:10-13; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

It is significant that the number eight marks this passage. It speaks a new beginning:

- It is the eighth vision.
- Eight things are said to exist no more—the first heaven, the first earth, the sea, tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain (vss. 1-4).
- Eight classes of sinners are found under eternal judgment—the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars (vs. 8).

God will begin to “reconcile all things” to Himself in the Millennium, but it will not be complete until the Eternal State is reached (Col. 1:20). Sin and death will still exist in the Millennium (1 Cor. 15:25-26), but in the Eternal State all trace of sin and Satan and death will be gone (John 1:29). During the Millennium, righteousness will “reign” (Isa. 32:1), but in the Eternal State, righteousness “dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). In contrast to this, those who stand for righteousness today “suffer” (1 Peter 3:14).

Righteousness will reign in the Millennium through Christ ruling with “a rod of iron” (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:27). But in the Eternal State, there will be no need for reigning because there will be nothing to subjugate, for all will be of God, and He will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). Christ and the heavenly saints will “reign to the ages of ages” (the Eternal State) but not in the ages of ages (Rev. 22:5 – J. N. Darby Trans.). There is no mention of a King reigning in His kingdom here in this passage because it will have been delivered up to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Hence, the Millennium will be for the vindication of God’s holy character, but the Eternal State is for the satisfaction of His heart.

The great point in regard to the Eternal State is that everything will be “new” (vs. 1). Heaven and earth will abide as distinct places throughout all eternity, but they will be in an entirely new condition. The “heaven” mentioned here is not the abode of God, which doesn’t need to be made new, but rather the atmospheric and stellar heavens.

The fact that there will be “no more sea” indicates that there will be no more separation in circumstances, as we know them. A “sea” is a separating element in nature and is used to indicate separation in circumstances, age, time, and nationality, etc. Time distinctions, geographical boundaries, human limitations and differences will be gone then. There will be nothing to separate men from happy fellowship with one another and with God.

New Jerusalem comes into view as the eternal abode of the Church. It is “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (vs. 2). The Church is seen in the closing chapters of this book in her “bride” character and in her “wife” character. As a bride, she is wholly for the enjoyment and satisfaction of the heart of Christ. As a wife, she will assist the Lord in the administration of the world to come—the Millennium (vs. 9). It is interesting to note that her wife character does not continue in the Eternal State, because that side of things will cease. However, the bride side continues forever.

It mentions new Jerusalem “coming down from God,” but there is no indication that it touches the earth and makes them one place. The two will remain distinct places of human destiny, but in the closest harmony.

The declaration is made, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them” (vs. 3). This is God’s great desire—to dwell in fellowship with “the sons of men” (Prov. 8:31). It will be accomplished perfectly then.

Verse 4 indicates a condition of fixed happiness. “Tears,” “death,” “sorrow,” “crying,” and “pain” are five things that are the result of sin. All of these will be gone forever because all things will be made new (vs. 5). It will be announced victoriously: “It is done.” This marks the fulfillment of God’s purpose.

Verses 6-7 indicate that redeemed men will always have a thirst. Our thirst in the day of God will be for more of Christ and His love. He is the “the Water of life” who alone can satisfy that thirst. Though being in the Eternal State, we will still be dependent creatures; we will never be self-sufficient. God will meet our every desire perfectly, and will eternally satisfy us with Him who is “enough, the mind and heart to fill” (L.F. #174).

Verse 8 indicates that not only will there be a fixed state of happiness and bliss for the righteous, but there will also be a fixed state of damnation for the lost. Eight classes of sinners are mentioned as being under eternal judgment in the lake of fire.

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 21:9-22:5: The Church in the Administration of the World to Come (22:1-5)

(Chapters 21:9-22:5)

This section is an appendix in the book of Revelation. It takes us back in time to the Millennium and furnishes us with further details regarding the administration of the world to come under Christ and the Church. This is the time when the Church will rightly enter government. Many Christians think that they should be involved in world politics and government today, but this is not the time for it.

There are vast differences between the false church ("the harlot") and the true ("the bride, the Lamb's wife"):

- The Harlot is seen in the "wilderness" because she is spiritually destitute (Rev. 17:3).
- The Bride is seen from a "high mountain" because she has been exalted by God (Rev. 21:10).
- The Harlot is referred to as a "city" having everything of man in it (Rev. 17:9).
- The Bride is referred to as a "city" having everything of Christ in it (Rev. 21:10).
- The Harlot is spoken of as "great" (7 times) but not holy (Rev. 17:1, etc.).
- The Bride is spoken of as "holy" but not great (Rev. 21:10 – J. N. Darby Trans.).
- The Harlot glorifies herself (Rev. 18:7).
- The Bride is glorified by God (Rev. 21:11).

As we look back over the chapters in the book of Revelation we can trace the Church's history and her final destiny. She is first seen on earth in the place of testimony as "seven golden lamps," and sadly failing in her responsibility (chaps. 2-3). Then, she is seen as part of the "four and twenty elders" around the throne in heaven as intelligent observers of the wisdom of God in His dealings with men (chaps. 4-5). Then, she is seen as "the Lamb's wife" at the marriage of the Lamb in heaven (chap. 19:7-10). After this, she is seen as part of "the armies" that follow Christ out of heaven in His warrior judgments (chap. 19:14). Then, she is seen as the eternal "bride" of Christ providing eternal joy and satisfaction to Him (chap. 21:2). Lastly, in this appendix, she is seen as a heavenly "city" in the seat of administration over the world to come (chap. 21:9-22:5). What a story of divine grace!

The Heavenly City

Chap. 21:9-10—John is shown "the bride, the Lamb's wife," but when he looks at her, he sees a "city," not a woman. This change in the figures is necessary because a woman in Scripture does not exercise herself in administrative affairs. This is consistent with the general tenor of Scripture. Therefore, the figure is changed to a "city" and is used hereafter in the chapter.

If the number eight marks the Eternal State, the number twelve marks this Millennial scene in the world to come. The number twelve stands for administrative perfection:

- Twelve gates (chap. 21:12).
- Twelve angels (chap. 21:12).
- Twelve tribes of Israel on the gates (chap. 21:12).
- Twelve foundations (chap. 21:14).
- Twelve apostles (chap. 21:14).
- Twelve thousand furlongs (chap. 21:16).
- Twelve times twelve cubits (chap. 21:17).
- Twelve precious stones (chap. 21:19-20).
- Twelve pearls (chap. 21:21).
- Twelve manner of fruits (chap. 22:2).
- Twelve months of the year (chap. 22:2).

The "city" is not a description of heaven (as often thought), but of the Church reigning with Christ over the earth in the Millennium. It is not a literal city floating in the sky. Revelation is a book of symbols and these are used to describe the Church in its administration of the world to come. A city speaks of an organized system of life under an ordered government. In this case it is holy in nature, heavenly in character, and

divine in origin.

Her Universal Administration of the Earth

Chap. 21:11—The heavenly “city” is God’s vessel of display through which His glory and the glory of Christ will stream. “Gold” is the prominent material in these verses. It speaks of divine righteousness which will be the rule of the kingdom (Isa. 32:1; 61:11). The “city” will be adorned with “the glory of God” and will be used to transmit that glory (“shining”) before the world (Eph. 2:7). Its glory is like “a jasper stone” (a diamond), “clear as crystal” because in that day, being glorified, there will be nothing in the Church to hinder the outflow of the glory of Christ.

Chap. 21:12-13—The city has “a wall,” which speaks of separation and seclusion, and thus the exclusion of all that is not of Christ. This is evidence that in the Millennium there will still be enemies and the presence of evil (1 Cor. 15:25-26). But no evil or predator will penetrate that city! The city also has “twelve gates.” They speak of administrative responsibility (Deut. 25:7; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:1-2) and the reception of all that is of Christ. At the gates are “twelve angels.” They represent the whole innumerable company of angelic beings. They are not part of the city, but wait outside it to carry out whatever service the Church sees necessary in the government of the earth.

Chap. 21:14-20—The city has “twelve foundations” garnished with “precious stones.” This speaks of the varied glories of Christ shining in and through the saints. Precious stones do not have inherent light and neither do the saints have glory in themselves—their beauty will result from His glory reflecting in them. (Compare Psalm 90:17.) As stones have various colors and hues, so the saints in their glorified state will retain their individuality. The city as a whole is “pure gold” (vs. 18), but it is also as “clear glass,” which means that the city will be a display of righteousness before the world.

Chap. 21:21—It will also have “twelve pearls” mounted on its gates. A pearl is an object of preciousness (Matt. 13:45-46). Hence, the Church will be displayed before the world as the object of preciousness to the heart of Christ (John 17:23; Rev. 3:9). The city has a “street” of pure gold running through it. In ordinary life, a street is the means by which men interact with one another in business and pleasure. It speaks of the inter-communion of the saints. Being of “pure gold” indicates that the fellowship and inter-communion in the city will be along the lines of what is divine, rather than what is natural and worldly.

Chap. 21:22-27—At least seven things are mentioned as being not in the city. There will be no “temple.” That is, nothing that will conceal the presence of God and access to Him. There will also be no “sun” (created light), no “moon” (borrowed light), and no “candle” (artificial light). This indicates that there will be no need of earthly and natural things to guide the administrative decisions made by the city concerning its government of the earth. There will also be no “night” there because the light of the knowledge of God will pervade everything (vs. 25). Light will fill the city. This will be in a literal sense as well as in a spiritual sense. The nations on earth will “walk in the light” of the city (vs. 24). This means that the earth will be ordered and regulated by the practical principles of divine righteousness that will be upheld by the city. This knowledge (“light”) relating to practical righteousness will be disseminated through Israel on earth (Isa. 2:2-3; 61:6, etc.). Thus the nations will be instructed as to how to live under a reign of righteousness. In that day the Church will be “the light of the world” in a perfect way (Matt. 5:14). (Today the Church is a testimony to the world with much imperfection.) The gates of the city will be open continually (“not be shut”) to receive the recognition and respect due to it. There will also be nothing that “defiles” in the city (vs. 27). And lastly, there will be no “curse” there (chap. 22:3).

In short, the city will require nothing from nature or from the world to sustain it. The nations will also bring their “glory and honour to it” (vs. 26). This does not mean that the Church will receive praise from the nations on earth, but that the nations will bring their homage to the One who dwells there.

Three Things That Will Characterize the Portion of Those in the City

1. “The book of life” (chap. 21:27). This speaks of the security of their relationship with Christ.
2. “The river of the water of life” (chap. 22:1). This speaks of the endless flow of blessing that will be theirs.
3. “The tree of life” (chap. 22:2). This speaks of the fullness of satisfaction from the enjoyment of fellowship with Christ.

Chap. 22:1-5—The “leaves” of the tree will be for “the healing of the nations.” Under the administration of Christ and the Church (Eph. 1:10), for the first time in history, the nations will dwell together peacefully. The animosity that has existed for thousands of years among the nations will be dealt with by the enforcement of righteousness, and there will be no more war (Psa. 46:9).

The Old Testament ends with a warning of a curse (Mal. 4:6), but the New Testament ends with a promise of there being no more “curse!” The “bondage of corruption,” that has pervaded the earth since the fall of man, will be lifted (Rom. 8:20-22). In short, God will overcome evil with good in the end. The “servants” of the Lamb (the saints) will render the service of praise to Him. They will see “His face.” The saints will see the Lord’s face literally (1 John 3:2), but here the Lord’s “face” is used figuratively to indicate intimacy. “His name shall be in their foreheads.” This means that the saints will all bear His character to moral perfection. And they will reign with Christ throughout the Millennium—“to the age of ages,” which is the Eternal State (vs. 5; Dan. 7:18). This means that the reign of Christ and the Church over the earth will not continue into the Eternal State, for there will be no need of government in that eternal day.

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 22:6-12: Closing Exhortations (22:6-21)

(Chap. 22:6-21)

Chap. 22:6—In these last verses, we have not only the closing exhortations of the book of Revelation, but also a fitting conclusion to the whole Word of God.

Three Announcements of the Lord's Coming

Prior to this, angels and elders have communicated with John about future events, but now they pale into the background and the Lord Himself speaks. This is a fitting finale to what has been unfolded in the book. He announces His coming—"Behold, I come quickly"—three times, in three different ways (vss. 7, 12, 20). Each presentation of His coming has an application to the believer as well as the unbeliever.

Chap. 22:7-11—The first announcement of the Lord's coming is intended to deliver us from settling down in this world while we wait for Him to come. If we "keep" in mind the judgments that are about to fall on the world, it will have the practical effect on our lives of delivering us from worldliness. As a result, the course of our lives will be altered, knowing that judgment is coming on everything that we see. If taken rightly, our energies will not be wasted in building up what is "reserved unto fire" but used to further the cause of Christ in this world (2 Peter 3:7).

In awe of what John sees, he tries to worship at the feet of the angel but is rebuked for it (vss. 8-9). They were but instruments in John's education in the prophetic subjects of this book; they were not to be made more than what they were. In contrast to Old Testament prophecies, which were sealed up unto the time of the end (Dan. 12:4), these things are not sealed because the Lord's return and the ensuing judgments are about to fall on this world. The Lord, therefore, says, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book for the time is at hand" (vs. 10). Then things will be in a fixed state. All will either be blessed of God or under the judgment of God (vs. 11).

Chap. 22:12-15—The second announcement of the Lord's coming is in connection with the fact that He is bringing His reward with Him (vs. 12). This is an allusion to the judgment seat of Christ, which involves the judgment of both the believers and unbelievers. The lost will be judged at Christ's Appearing and kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1), but believers will have their rewards on display in that day. This is another incentive to live for Christ. Again, a fixed condition will result, those who "wash their robes" in the blood of the Lamb will be blessed, and those who have not will be damned forever.

Chap. 22:16-21—The third and final announcement of the Lord's coming is calculated to stir bridal affections in our hearts and to arouse a concern for the lost that they may be saved. The Lord presents Himself in two ways:

In a way that refers back to the Old Testament prophecies—"the root and the offspring of David" (vs. 16).

In a way that is distinctly New Testament in character—"the bright and morning star" (vs. 16).

This stirs the affections of the bride to call upon the Lord to "come" (vs. 17). The "Spirit and the bride" say this together, indicating that the Spirit of God has produced this holy desire in the saints, and they are seen as one with the mind of the Spirit. A second call is given to the rest of heaven to join in the call for the Lord to "come" and bring these things to pass. To be in communion with the mind of the Spirit is not only to have a keen desire for the Lord to come, but also to have a healthy interest in the salvation of the lost. Hence, a third call to "come" is given by the Spirit and the bride to those who are still strangers to the grace of God that they would take of "the water of life" and be saved.

A warning is then given to any who would tamper with "the words of this prophecy." All who read it must be on guard of letting the unholy mind of man intrude into the divine revelation (vss. 18-19).

The Lord's Final Word

Chap. 22:20-21—The Lord speaks one final time. "Surely, I come quickly." This again stirs the bride to say with even more intensity, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We see in this the proper posture in waiting for the Lord to come. The bride does not call for the events of this prophecy to come to pass; she calls for her Lord to come. In the meantime, the Lord promises to give us the needed "grace" to continue in the path of faith until that moment comes.

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 6:1-8:5: The Seal Judgments (8:1-5)

(The Beginning of Sorrows)

(Chap. 6:1-8:5)

The part of the earth that the "seal" and "trumpet" judgments are concerned with is Western Europe, and perhaps North America—western nations that have outwardly embraced Christianity. "The Lamb" (Christ) proceeds to open the seals, signifying the bringing to pass of certain events and judgments in that part of the earth. These judgments will prepare the way for Him to take the inheritance and reign over it in His kingdom glory.

The word by the four living creatures is not, "Come and see," as the KJV renders it (vss. 1, 3, 5, 7), but simply, "Come," denoting Christ's providential power to bring these things to pass. Hence, "come" in this sense, refers to His providential command to cause these events to come to pass. The horsemen represent human agencies that will be moved by the providence of God. The Lord called the first half of Daniel's prophetic week of years—wherein is found the first six seal judgments—"the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8).

The First Seal Opened

(Chap. 6:1-2)

What is portrayed in the rider on “a white horse” is the very first thing that will happen on earth after the Rapture. The rider is not Christ (chap. 19:11), nor is it the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). It refers to the Church of Rome using its power, influence, and money to gather ten nations in Western Europe into a federation called “the beast.” This is the revival of the Roman Empire indicated in Daniel 2:41-43 and 7:7-8. Revelation 17:1-6 also points to this. It indicates that the Roman Catholic Church (under the figure of the whore) will have control of this newly formed federation of nations in the first 3½ years of the prophetic week in Daniel 9:27. If it will be under the control of that religious system during that time, it must of necessity have been revived prior to it.

The horse here in chapter 6 is “white,” signifying papal Rome’s pretense of uprightness and purity of purpose. The rider has a “bow” with no arrows, indicating that Rome’s conquest over the nations of Western Europe and the bringing of them together into a super-power will be a bloodless thing. It will be accomplished by summit meetings and treaties rather than through warfare. The Catholic Church’s rule over the newly-revived empire will be the empire’s 7th form of government in its history—but it will only “continue a short space”—the first 3½ years of Daniel’s prophetic week (chap. 17:9-11).

Immediately upon the emergence of this new empire in the West, the Roman “prince” at the head of its political operations under the Catholic Church will make a “covenant” with the Jews for their “protection” from the Islamic nations that surround them (Dan. 9:27a). Prophecy does not give us any further detail as to who this man is. He is simply a political figurehead of the Church of Rome who will fill the office of “the prince” at the beginning of the final week of years. He is identified as “he” in Daniel 9:27a.

This man could not be the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8, 20-21)—the personal “Beast” (Rev. 13:4-7; 19:20, etc.) because that man rises to power and seizes the office of the Roman prince in the middle of the week. We know this because Revelation 13:5 and Daniel 7:25 tell us that his tenure will be for “forty and two months” or “time and times and the dividing of time.” These time periods in prophecy are measured from the middle of the week through to the end of the week (Dan. 12:11). Hence, the reign of the “little horn” or the personal Beast will be during the latter half of the week—the time of the Great Tribulation. When he seizes the office of the Roman prince in the middle of the week, he will proceed to breach the terms of the covenant which will have been made with the Jews (Dan. 9:27b – the 2nd “he.”). Thus, as L. Laurenson has pointed out, there is the making of the covenant, and there is a breaking of the covenant; these are two different things done by two different men (Messiah the Prince, p. 160). (In the book of Daniel, the positions of those that rule among the Gentile kings are offices that don’t necessarily refer to one individual. For instance, in connection with the Greek Empire in chapter 11, there are nine or ten different men mentioned in the role of the King of the North, who succeed each other in that office: likewise, with the King of the South. It is the same in Daniel 9:27, in connection with the Roman Empire. The “prince”—the first “he” and the second “he” are not the same person.)

The making of this covenant is significant in prophecy. It marks the resumption of the cycle of weeks (of years) in Daniel 9:24-27, with the 70th and final week about to be fulfilled—after which God will bring in the kingdom as promised in Daniel 9:24. As a result of this pact being made with Israel, the Jews, who are presently scattered worldwide, will feel safe to return to their homeland, and will do so en masse in the first part of the week (Isa. 18:1-4; Psa. 73:10). This covenant will enable the Jews to practice Judaism (“the sacrifice and the oblation” – Dan. 9:27) according to the Law of Moses without being molested. Killing their sacrifices and presenting them to Jehovah is something that they have not done for over 2000 years (Hos. 3:4).

The Second Seal Opened

(Chap. 6:3-4)

Civil peace will be taken away from the nations in Western Europe (Matt. 24:6-7a). The horse is “red” indicating bloodshed.

The Third Seal Opened

(Chap. 6:5-6)

Agriculture will fail and widespread famine will follow (Matt. 24:7b). The horse is “black” indicating a time of lamentation and mourning. “The oil and the wine” refers to the wealthy in society—particularly the Jews who will have returned en masse to their homeland (Prov. 21:17).

The Fourth Seal Opened

(Chap. 6:7-8)

Pestilence (disease) will spread over Western Europe (“the fourth part of the earth”) and many will die (Matt. 24:7c). The horse is “pale” indicating sickness and death.

The Fifth Seal Opened

(Chap. 6:9-11)

The authorities in Rome will begin to martyr the Jewish witnesses who will preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:9). This gospel announces that there is a King who is coming who will put down all governmental power and will establish His own kingdom wherein He will reign supreme (Psa. 96). This will be considered subversive to the Catholic regime (the harlot – chap. 17) which will be in control of the empire (the beast) at that time, and it will draw out its wrath against these witnesses, whom it will see as revolutionists. Thus, they will be apprehended by the authorities and executed—martyred (Rev. 17:6). The souls of these witnesses will remain in the separate state until the end of the prophetic week, and then they will be resurrected (Rev. 14:13).

The Sixth Seal Opened

(Chap. 6:12-17)

As things approach the middle of the week, Satan will be cast to the earth (chap. 12:7-9, 13), and he will immediately cause a convulsion in the government in the confederated nations of the West under the leadership of the Catholic system. Thus, there will be a great shake-up politically. This is presented symbolically under the figure of “a great earthquake.” As a result, the government offices in the West will be temporarily thrown into a state of confusion and anarchy. It is not mentioned here, but Satan will then energize a man (the personal Beast) who will rise up out of the turmoil and seize control of the leadership of the empire (Rev. 13:1-10), and he will motivate the ten kings (nations) in the federation to put down the Catholic regime—the harlot (Rev. 17:16-17).

Men’s hearts will fail them for fear in view of what is to come (Luke 21:25-26). The fact that they speak of “the wrath of the Lamb” shows that they are enlightened people who are familiar with the gospel and certain Biblical truths, but sadly they have neglected to receive Christ as their Saviour when they had opportunity to do so. They mistakenly think that He is about to come and judge the world, but that will be later.

Outline of the Book of Revelation, Revelation 8:1-11:18: Trumpet Judgments (9:1-21)

The Great Tribulation

(Chap. 8:1-11:18)

Vss. 1-6—The unfolding of events in chapter 6 is resumed with the opening of the “seventh seal” (chap. 8:1). It results in the seven trumpet judgments falling on the Western nations that have had the light of Christianity, but have rejected it. These judgments will be executed directly from the hand of the Lord Himself (the Angel-priest) and are more direct and severe than the seal judgments. These judgments cover the last half of the prophetic week of Daniel 9:27 (3½ years), which is the time of “the Great Tribulation” (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14).

In connection with the trumpet judgments in chapters 8-9, it is significant that the Spirit of God uses the expression “the third part” fourteen times (in the J. N. Darby Translation). It is a technical expression in prophecy referring to a restricted area of the world—the Western prophetic earth—which is essentially the territory that the old Roman Empire once held.

The first four trumpet-judgments have to do with the apostatizing of the Christianized nations in the West, whereas the fifth trumpet-judgment is concerned with the apostatizing of the Jews in the land of Israel. The result will be a thorough apostatizing of this once enlightened part of the earth.

The First Trumpet

(Chap. 8:7)

The prosperity (“trees” and “green grass”) in the Western nations will dry up. This marks the collapse of the economy in the West.

The Second Trumpet

(Chap. 8:8)

John sees “a great mountain burning with fire” dissolve into “the sea”—i.e. a giant volcanic eruption. This refers to a great and powerful nation in the West disintegrating and dissipating in the “sea” of nations (Rev. 17:15). It is a judgment of God, of which “fire” is a symbol. The result is that many in the West will formally give up their profession of God and apostatize (become “blood”). Some think that this mountain might be the United States of America. If this is true, it explains why that great military power is not mentioned as having a part in the coming wars of Armageddon.

Mr. W. Kelly said, “The United States of America will be swamped into a political marsh; and as they have been hitherto a mere omnium gatherum or conglomerate from the rest of the world, especially from Europe, comprising no doubt a vast deal of skill, industry, and enterprise, but also not a little of the scum and refuse of all nations; so I believe they will break up into factions of noisy primitive elements; and, after going off in boastful vapouring, will at length burst as a bubble....So as to America, I conceive that the young giant power which has grown so fast will sink still faster, probably through intestine quarrel, but assuredly somehow before that day comes. They will break up into different fragments. Their prime object is to maintain political unity. This is their great ambition, and though it may appear to stand and advance, as everything ambitious is apt to prosper for a time, it will be all blown down before long. For it is a remarkable fact that there is no place in prophecy for a vast influential power, such as the American United States would naturally be, if it so long retained its cohesion. Is it conceivable that there should be such a power existing at that day without any mention of it? Can the omission be accounted for save by its dissolution?” (Lectures on the Minor Prophets, pp. 109-110).

The Third Trumpet

(Chap. 8:10-11)

A great person in a high position of influence in the West (“a great star”) will formally give up his professed knowledge of God, and this will lead more into apostasy.

The Fourth Trumpet

(Chap. 8:12)

Many other influential leaders in the West who men look to for guidance and advice (“the sun,” “the moon,” and “the stars”) will also fall into apostasy. These might be respected political men, financial analysts, etc.

The Fifth Trumpet

(Chap. 9:1-12)

The Antichrist, the Jew’s false Messiah (“a star”), will come forward in his full satanic character. He will be allowed to open “the abyss”—the prison house of demons (Luke 8:30-31)—and let loose their blinding influence (“smoke”) on earth. The symbol of “locusts” with “tails” like a “scorpion” and with a “sting” of a scorpion (vs. 10) is used to describe the spiritual destruction of apostasy that these demonic agents will cause in souls. Their mission will be to cause the unsealed mass of the Jews in the land of Israel to believe the “lie” of the Antichrist (vs. 4). T. B. Baines points out that since the sealing in chapter 7 was not for the Gentiles, but for a select number from the twelve tribes, we can deduct that this trumpet-judgment is particularly concerned with the reprobate mass of the Jews in the land of Israel (The Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 120). As a retributive judgment, God will allow them to be blinded by the lie (Isa. 8:21-22) because they refused to believe the gospel of His grace when it was preached by the Church. (His blinding power will also deceive the mass in the western, once Christianized, nations, and it will lead them into apostasy (2 Thess. 2:9-10).

The Sixth Trumpet

(Chap. 9:13-21)

The federation of ten nations in the West (the beast), which will have control of the land of Israel as being part of its empire, will have its eastern border (which “the great river Euphrates” symbolizes) give way to a vast army of attacking soldiers. This will be the armies of another ten-nation confederacy of Moslem nations to the north and east of Israel. They will be led by “the King of the North”—the Assyrian (Psa. 83:1-8; Dan. 11:40-41). See Revelation 16:12. In a matter of a few days, these armies will sweep through the land of Israel destroying the mass of the Jews who will have received the Antichrist and worship the image of the Beast. These fierce warriors are described as being driven by Satanic power—“their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents” (vs. 19).

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