Revelation 19:12-13 (Edward B. Dennett) 78393

The Name Above Every Name: Papers on the Excellency, Exaltation and Supremacy of Christ, Name Written ... His Name Is Called the Word of God, A (19:12-13)

It is only when we perceive that Revelation is a book of judgment that we are prepared for the unwonted aspects in which our blessed Lord is here presented. In chapter 1, He is seen as judging in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and in such a manner that even the beloved disciple fell at His feet as dead. Here also— only now in relation to the world—He wears the same judicial mien, betokened by the same feature in that “His eyes were as a flame of fire.” Indeed, it is expressly said in this scripture, that “in righteousness He doth judge and make war.” It is the same Jesus who once sat in lowly guise upon Samaria’s well, but who now, after His long session at God’s right hand, is returning to this world, which had rejected and crucified Him, to vindicate His rights, and to establish His throne, and thus to glorify God, by making good all that He is, in His righteous government. All things are to be put under His feet, and in His sudden appearance through the opened heaven, we see Him coining to subdue, enter upon, and possess His rightful inheritance.

Before considering the significance of the names here mentioned, it will be for profit to call attention to the connection. In the previous part of the chapter, events of great importance in the divine ways are introduced. All heaven is filled with praise when the great corruptress of the earth meets with her righteous doom at the hands of God. Thereupon we have the celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb, for which His wife had made herself ready, and was, through grace, arrayed in fine linen, clean and white—the righteousnesses of saints. In Ephesians, we have the private and intimate presentation of the bride, as “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Here it is rather the public marriage, to which guests can be invited, and with which all the heavenly hosts can be in communion. It marks the termination of the time of the patience of Jesus Christ; but if He is about to be exalted in the former scene of His shame and humiliation, He will share the glory of His throne with His beloved bride.

This is the fourth time the opened heaven is mentioned in the New Testament. The first occasion was at the baptism of Jesus, when “He saw the Spirit of God descending like a clove, and lighting upon Him: and to a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The lowly Jesus, fulfilling all righteousness, and identifying Himself with His poor and afflicted people—the saints in the earth, and the excellent, in whom was all His delight—is here seen as the Object of the heart of His God. Next, He Himself speaks to Nathanael, and says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter [or henceforth] ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” Here on earth—at that time, and also in the future—we apprehend, He is seen as the object of angelic ministry. At the death of Stephen, the third instance occurs, as thus described: “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.” The Object of the heart of God has now become the Object of the believer, who has thus, through grace, been associated with God in His own delight in His beloved Son. Now lastly, the heavens open that the Son of Man may come forth, as we have seen, in righteousness to judge and to make war.

After the personal description is given, it is said, “He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.” The introduction of this statement in this especial place, is very striking: “His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns”; and then, before relating that He was “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood,” the secret, written name is mentioned. There must be a reason for this; and as the explanation we cannot forbear giving the words of another: “But, though thus revealed as man, He had a glory none could penetrate into”; and the writer adds, in a note, “So it was as to His person and service. No one knew the Son but the Father. It was the secret of His rejection. He was that, and so necessarily such in the world. But the world under Satan’s influence would not have that. In His humiliation His divine glory was maintained in the unsounded depths of His person. Now He is revealed in glory; but there ever remained what none could search, or penetrate, into His own Person and nature... As revealing God, in grace or power, so as to make Him known, we know Him. But His Person as Son always remains unsearchable. His name is written, so that we know it is unknowable—not unknown, but unknowable.” These weighty words deserve the careful consideration of the reader—especially at the present moment—for they contain a wholesome reminder of the inscrutability of the Person of the Son.

First comes the written name, unknown to all but its divine Possessor; and then, in connection with the vesture dipped in blood, it is said, “And His name is called The Word of God.” This must be carefully distinguished from what is found in the first verse of John’s gospel. “The Word” there who was with God, and who was God, if it be taken, for the moment, as a divine title, cannot mean less than that (as has been well said) “He is, and He is the expression of the whole mind that subsists in God”; and this absolutely as relating to all that God is. But in our scripture, while the “Word of God” is the revelation of what God is, it is the revelation of God in a special aspect or character. The very details of His appearing out of heaven sitting on a white horse will make this plain. There is not a word of tenderness, grace, or affection; He is “called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire... He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.” All speaks of holy and unsparing judgment; of judgment according to the standard of a righteous God; as indeed it is said: “He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:15). It is of all this, of God so presented, that Christ, as the Word of God, is the revelation. So in the gospels, for example, while Christ was ever God manifest in the flesh, it is in the aspect, sometimes of power, sometimes of grace—sometimes as light, and sometimes as love. But in whatever way, He expressed that which was divine; He was never less than all that He is.

Yet another name is given: in verse 16 it is said, “And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” The context explains at once the force of this title, showing that, in harmony with the whole book, it has relation to the earth. In the preceding verse, we are told that He will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron; and the name, or title, we are considering, indicates that it is consequent upon this that our blessed Lord will establish His throne of universal supremacy upon the earth. Already exalted at the right hand of God, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him,” He will in the day of which our passage

speaks, be exalted also in this world, when He will “have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” It will be the fulfillment of the promise, “Also I will make Him My Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth” (Psa. 89:27.)

As showing the delight of the Spirit of God in (directing our attention to the future glory of Christ in this world, it may be mentioned that twice before in this book it has been introduced. At the very commencement, in John’s address to the seven churches, we read, “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.” It is the past of our blessed Lord, what He was when down here as the Faithful Witness; it is the present, what He is as risen from the dead, the First Begotten; and it is the future, what He will be, when He shall have taken His great power, and when all the potentates of the earth will render their homage at His feet as Lord of them all. In Revelation 11 we end also the same blessed era. When the seventh angel sounded, “there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of His Christ;1 and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). At the present time, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together”; in that day, “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God:” and under the rule of the rightful King over all the nations of the earth, the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

Such is the blessed future which awaits the earth; but before that can arrive, all the believers of this period will have been caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The marriage of the Lamb, as we have seen from our chapter, precedes the appearing of the Lord. The hope of the Church, therefore, is the return of the Lord for His saints, for this they daily wait in communion with His own heart. To be with Him will be the consummation of their joy, inasmuch as it will be His joy in presenting His bride to Himself, which will fill their hearts and overflow in perpetual praise at His feet. But their vision is not bounded by this prospect, glorious as it is; for they look forward also, with earnest longing, to His appearing in glory, not because, in the grace of their God, they will be displayed in the same glory with Himself, but rather because the time will then have come when their Lord, who was once rejected and crucified, will be publicly exalted and enthroned as King of kings and Lord of lords. Yea—