

Revelation - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), Making Ready for the Marriage. (19:7)

"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."—Rev. 19:7.

IT is blessed to find that the testimony of God in the Scriptures, concerning our standing in His presence, is to the finished work of Christ. "Ye are complete in Him." (Col. 2) The Son of God has sanctified us with His own blood, and made us nigh to God, "having obtained eternal redemption for us." It is, therefore, by grace, and not in any degree by creature-merit, that every believer is fitted for the presence of God, and will be presented before Him faultless with exceeding joy, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. 10:4.)

But there is another point treated of in this portion of the word of God, which is the practically preparing ourselves for the marriage supper; purifying ourselves, that we may "not be ashamed before Him at His coming;" cleansing our hearts and ways, and being diligent in every good work, that "we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless;" separating from everything which we know will not be "found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus." It is most blessedly true that then will be "granted" to the bride of the Lamb, as a substantial reality, what is now imputed to faith, "the righteousness of God." "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." It was a grant, because it is all of grace. But we are also told that she had "made herself ready." She expected the marriage, and therefore prepared for it. We must know that our sins are put away by the sacrifice of Christ, and that God has given us a standing of perfectness in Christ risen and glorified, thus taking us out of our old Adam standing of ruin and guilt, delivering us from sin and curse, the law and death, and making us joint-heirs with Christ, so as to leave no question whatever between God and our own souls, before we can truly be said to be making ourselves ready for the marriage. When we are brought to see that the purging of sin, and justification, is not our work, but the work of God in Christ; and that we are brought into all this blessing by faith in Jesus, we can give glory to God, and worship, knowing that He that has called us, and fitted us for glory in Christ, is also preparing a place in glory for us by Christ, and will also consummate our everlasting union with Him, and accordingly we go forth to meet the Bridegroom. But if there be misgivings in the soul about forgiveness of sins, and standing in the perfection of Christ, how can there be a making ready for the marriage? God has given us His word, in which He plainly states, that He has forgiven sins, justified from all things, and made complete in Christ every believer in Jesus; and this is enough. We believe God means what He says; see the accomplishment of this wondrous grace in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son; and whatever men or devils may say, or circumstances may be, we rely on the faithfulness of God; and thus feeling we are on unquestionable ground, rejoice in hope of glory, and make ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. And, beloved, what is the present attitude of our souls? Has the hope of the Lord's return to take us unto Himself taken root in our hearts? Do our ways and conversation show that we are making ready for the marriage? The knowledge of it, merely as a doctrine, will have no power on our daily walk; but if we really feel the coming of our Great God and Saviour to be the hope of our souls, we shall set little value, on present things, counting them vain and perishing. The "better and enduring substance" brought so very near to faith and hope, constrains us to disentangle ourselves from associations and circumstances which we are assured will not bear the all-searching light of that day. And this process will go on; for as knowledge of God and of ourselves increases, so will fresh discoveries be made of the deceitfulness of our hearts, and our consciences will heed the call for confession and cleansing in the presence of God. The lamp needs frequent trimming, as well as repeated renewing's of oil, in order to shine brightly; and we know that our Lord would have our loins girded about, and our lights burning, while He assures our hearts that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Beloved, how does this assurance affect us?

Let us meditate much on the majesty and glory of our adorable Emmanuel, and on God's estimate of His death; let us often feed on His broken body and shed blood; let our spirits more abundantly catch the fervent feelings of His heart now in the presence of God for us; let us continually think upon the cost and glory of our eternal redemption, and we shall find an earnest desire and power springing up in our hearts, to make ourselves ready for the marriage.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Fear Not (1:17-18)

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (Revelation 1:17-18).

Every one of us must have to do with the Lord Jesus. Each person will yet come before Him. Nothing can possibly hinder this. The joyful expectation of the Christian is, that he will see his Savior's face and be like Him. Those who are not born again — unbelievers—will assuredly see Jesus too, but not with joy: as a wicked man once said,

I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh (Num. 24:17).

Many persons now turn away from the Savior's name; they like to banish His blessed gospel from their thoughts; but then,

at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (see Phil. 2:10-11).

This is God's decree, and it must be accomplished.

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations (Psa. 33:11).

There is, therefore, no possibility of escape from having to do with Jesus; and I doubt not that those who will go away into everlasting punishment will send up a cry continually from the pit of torment, that Jesus Christ is Lord. This is very solemn, and makes the gospel a matter of such individual application and importance. The Scripture says, "every knee," "every tongue," "every one of us shall give account of himself in the day of judgment!"

Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him (Rev. 1:7)!

plainly showing that men must have to do personally with the Lord Jesus. Now He graciously pardons and saves; then He will righteously condemn, and punish with everlasting destruction. What folly, then, it is to neglect His great salvation!

In these verses of the Revelation we find that John saw the Lord Jesus, and he says,

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead (Rev. 1:17).

So dazzling and refulgent is the glorified Savior, that even His most intimate and beloved servants, while in the body, cannot catch a glimpse of Him without being overpowered by the brightness of His glory. Perhaps there never was a man on earth who knew such deep intimacy with Jesus as John. We find him with the Lord in the days of His flesh on every remarkable occasion. At the Supper he was the only one of the disciples that leaned on His bosom; and in an anxious moment he only could turn to his loving Master and say,

Lord, who is it? (John 13:25).

And further, when Jesus was betrayed and apprehended, and all others forsook Him, John followed Him into the High Priest's palace, and stood by Him to the last, even at the cross. John, then, must have known very deep intimacy with the Lord, and his writings show how richly the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost.

John was also faithful after the Savior left the world. He was transported to the isle of Patmos for his godly life and testimony. It is important to notice that he was banished, not so much for the doctrines he held, as for what he said and did; for in this chapter he tells us that he

was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9).

Most persons around us now have no objection to the outward forms of religion, and will allow you to hold what doctrines you please, provided you keep them to yourself; but the unrenewed mind still kicks against faithful testimony in life and word to the infinite and glorious perfections of the person, work, offices, fitness, and fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Christians now bore distinctly

the testimony of Jesus Christ,

we may be sure that it would still be offensive to many; for the offence of the cross has not ceased.

While John was honoring his earth-rejected Master in desolate Patmos, his Master marvelously honored him. His persecuted and banished apostle was chosen, not only to convey the Revelation to the churches, but to have such blessed views of the future as no one was ever privileged before. This is very sweet to contemplate. Accordingly, we are told that he was

in the Spirit on the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10).

By his being

in the Spirit,

we are to understand that he was not musing or meditating according to the thoughts of the natural mind, but that he was under the guidance, control, and operations of the Holy Spirit; the thoughts of his mind, and the affections of his heart, were according to the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Testifier and Glorifier of Christ. Every believer has the Spirit; but we are not always

in the Spirit.

In this state of mind the beloved apostle suddenly heard behind him a trumpet-like sound so very loud, that he tells us it was

a great voice, as of a trumpet (Rev. 1:10).

The voice said,

I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, &c. (Rev. 1:11).

This was a remarkable sound, which so aroused the dear apostle, that he turned to see the voice that spoke with him; but no sooner had he looked behind him, than a marvelous vision of Christ and the Churches, resplendent with unheard of glory and beauty, met his astonished eye. He saw the churches symbolized by seven golden candlesticks — costly, pure, precious, heavenly, fitted to bear light; and in the midst of the candlesticks he saw the Lord; but, astounding as the great voice must have been, and beautiful as the appearance of the seven candlesticks must have been, it was neither the one nor the other that so overpowered the apostle, as the sight of Christ Himself —

When I saw HIM, I fell at His feet as dead (Rev. 1:17).

Oh, my reader, it is not being taken up with the Church, or sounds, or sights of any kind, apart from Christ, that really humbles us; but when by faith we feel near the risen Savior, it is this that withers up fleshly pretensions, that exposes the filthiness of creature-righteousness, makes us feel in an atmosphere that breathes holy solemnity into the soul, and gives deep reality of feeling to the heart and conscience. It was when Job was brought to say,

Now mine eye seeth thee (Job 42:5),

that he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, he exclaimed,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips (Isa. 6:5).

The beloved Daniel tells us,

When I saw this great vision, there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength (see Dan. 10:8).

The prophet Habakkuk also says,

When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself (Hab. 3:16).

Ah! my reader, be assured that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. In His holy presence our depravity and weakness are made manifest; there we learn that we are really fallen creatures, corrupt, and very unlike Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. Here we find that God's balance is infinitely holy, His weights perfectly just, and that, weighed by Him, we are

found wanting (Dan. 5:27).

Oh, that you, dear reader, might be led to consider, not what you are as compared with your neighbours, but what you are before God, and how you will meet the Lord Jesus at His coming!

I say, it was a sight of the Lord Jesus that brought John down

at His feet as dead (Rev. 1:17).

Though he had full assurance that he was born again, that he was a son of God, that all his sins were purged, that he was in-dwelt by the Spirit, and therefore, as to his eternal state, he had nothing to fear; yet the glory of the ascended Lord was more than he could bear while in this body. In a momentary glimpse, John seemed to eye the adorable Lord from head to foot. He tells us, that He was

like unto the Son of man (Rev. 1:13),

and yet He declared Himself to be

the First and the Last (Rev. 1:11).

And in this brief account we find His Person — God and Man — beautifully expressed. Who can be

the First and the Last,

but the eternal Godhead? and who is

like unto the Son of man,

but He who was in

the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3),

and

was found in fashion as a man (see Phil. 2:8)?

We may gather from His being

in the midst of the seven candlesticks (Rev. 1:13),

that He is in Spirit with the Churches, though personally absent.

His eyes,

which once wept tears of sympathy and pity, now,

as a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14),

show us that nothing escapes His observation; He therefore says to every assembly,

I know thy works (Rev. 2:2).

The sharp two-edged sword (Rev. 1:16),

and

His voice as the sound of many waters (Rev. 1:15),

may teach us that He judges and reproves; while the

garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle (Rev. 1:13),

may remind us that He is not now mocked with a purple robe, nor is His sacred bosom now exposed to the rude centurion's spear; but that He is girded for the service of judging the assemblies.

We may learn, perhaps, from

His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow (Rev. 1:14),

that He is the I AM, perfect in purity and spotlessness. The

seven stars in His right hand (Rev. 1:16)

may teach us that He is the source, the upholder, and sovereign controller of all ministry in His Church, and that it all flows from the hand that was pierced on Calvary's cross; while

His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace (Rev. 1:15),

may teach us that though He was crucified through weakness, when His foot were nailed to the tree, yet that now all judgment is committed unto Him, He will tread

the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Rev. 19:15),

and that

He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25).

And what can

His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength (Rev. 1:16)

set before us, but that He who once condescended to be spit upon and smitten for us, whose visage was

marred more than any man (Isa. 52:14),

is now the exalted Head of the Church, Head too of all principality and power, and in the full enjoyment of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was?

What a glorious sight of the Lord had John! and though it so affected him as to bring him

as dead (Rev. 1:17)

at His feet, nevertheless he afterwards found that the feet of Jesus was the place of honor and blessing; and this is not the only instance in the New Testament. When the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul, and arrested him in his persecuting zeal by a glorious manifestation of Himself, it at once brought him prostrate on the earth. He says,

Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground (Acts 22:6-7).

But though blinded with the glorious light, humbled at the feet of Jesus, and crying out to Him whom he had so blasphemed, and whose members he had so persecuted,

What shall I do, Lord? (Acts 22:10)

nevertheless, he found the feet of Jesus the place of rich and abundant blessing even for the chief of sinners. The Lord said unto him,

Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do (Acts 22:10).

Oh, that the Spirit of God might now show sinners that the feet of Jesus is the place of blessing!

Peter is another witness of the same thing. He was fishing with his companions in the lake of Gennesaret. For many an hour he had been casting his net in vain. At last Jesus entered the ship; and when He had finished preaching, He prayed Peter to launch out into the deep, and let down the net for another draught. Peter appears to have thought it would be of little use, because he had toiled all night without success; however, as he had been requested to do so, he did it, when the multitude of fishes was so great that the net brake. This circumstance seems to have led Peter into the understanding that the person who had thus commanded him to let down the net was the Lord; and, humbled under a sense of His amazing condescension and power, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,

Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord (Luke 5:8)!

Observe, that Peter fell down as a sinful man; he felt so vile, and so unfit for the Lord's company, that he could only bow down before Him as a sinner. But how did Jesus reply? Did He say, You are such a sinner, you shall depart from me? No. You have sinned so much that I cannot receive you? No. If you will promise to do better for the future, I will pardon the past? Oh, no! but Peter found by happy experience, in thus casting himself at Jesus' feet as a poor guilty sinner, just as he was, that there was grace in the heart of Jesus to abound over all his sin. Jesus said unto him,

Fear not!

as much as to say, I welcome, pardon, cleanse, and save you; and more than this, you shall be honored in my service;

from henceforth thou shalt catch men (Luke 5:10).

Oh, what grace there is for self-abased sinners at the Savior's feet!

Let us look at another instance. A woman who was notorious for her sinful ways heard that Jesus had visited the city, and was sitting at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee. She felt the burden of her sins; her conscience was oppressed with guilt; her heart was sad. She needed a Savior, and He was near at hand. But will He save such a sinner? Can He welcome such a notoriously evil person? Will He who is so holy deign to listen to such a vile creature? Such might have been the reasonings of her distressed heart. Nevertheless, necessity compelled her to go to Jesus. She stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. Here we find another troubled soul, a conscience-stricken sinner, at the feet of Jesus. And what did the Lord say to her? Did He give her one upbraiding look? Did one reproachful word escape His lips? Oh, no; for He came

not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (see John 3:17).

He came to seek and to save that which was lost (see Luke 19:10).

He came into the world to save sinners (see 1 Tim. 1:15).

Jesus therefore said unto her,

Thy faith hath saved thee (Luke 7:50).

Oh, how blessedly do the Savior and sinner meet together! How welcome are such to the gracious heart of Jesus! How happy for the sinner to be thus received! There is nothing here between the guilty sinner and the gracious Savior; no ordinances, no ceremonial observances, no official interferences; but simply the guilty penitent confessing, and the Son of God forgiving. And the same who had said to another,

Thy sins be forgiven thee (Matt. 9:2),

now openly declared,

Thy faith,

not thine ointment, thy tears, nor thy kiss, acceptable fruits though they were, but

Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:50).

Now let us look again at John.

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.

The beloved apostle, being thus at his Master's feet, was now in a position to learn still deeper lessons of the Savior's love. John says,

He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not (Rev. 1:17)!

What a blessed manifestation of the compassionate heart of Jesus! How tender, how gentle, was the touch! That same right hand that had gotten eternal victory over His servant's enemies was now again put forth on his behalf; that hand which had been once willingly pierced for his sins was again stretched out for his recovery, at the same time comforting His fainting servant with

Fear not;

as much as to say, John, you have nothing to fear, no ground for discomfort, no warrant for uneasy apprehensions; for my right hand is for you, and not against you. If He who has; all power in heaven and in earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Redeemer, and Judge of all, says,

Fear not,

what ground can there be for disquietude?

But, more than this, the Master will give His fainting servant yet more intelligent reasons for not fearing, because of His person, finished work, and exaltation.

1. HIS PERSON.

I am the First and the Last (Rev. 1:17).

We have already referred to this. It may be well to add, that true peace must always be connected with right views of the person of Christ, because it is the dignity and glory of His person that give efficacy to His work. Take away His manhood, and we have no Substitute — no Redeemer; take away His Godhead, and we have no atoning virtue in the blood. The blessedness is, that both God and man are found in Him. Thus He was fitted for the stupendous work of eternal redemption. He was the Days-man, that brought in all the blessing man needed, and answered all that God righteously demanded. This is another reason why John should

Fear not.

2. HIS FINISHED WORK.

I am He that liveth, and was dead (Rev. 1:18).

As much as to say, John, I have died for you. I have borne all your sins, and removed all your transgressions from you. I have been into death instead of you, so that you shall never see death. I am alive again; therefore all your debt is cancelled, all just claims upon you as a sinner have been answered by me; and I am alive again; therefore you must live for ever.

Fear not.

3. HIS EXALTATION.

Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Rev. 1:18).

Unless every one of our sins had been purged, God could not have raised Christ from the dead. His resurrection, therefore, is God's public testimony that sin has been condemned, and for ever put away; and the risen Lord being exalted to the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor, appointed a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, invested with all power, and having all judgment committed to Him, are abundant proofs of the acceptance and security of all believers. And as to death and the grave, Who holds the keys? Did not Jesus say to His servant at His feet, faint, behold your risen and exalted Savior! Think of His person; consider His finished work upon the cross; behold Him triumphing over all your enemies in resurrection; contemplate Him justly exalted in heaven to the highest pinnacle of glory as your life, ever living to make intercession for you, and see Him securely holding the keys of hell and of death. Precious, glorious facts!

Dear reader! sooner or later you must have to do with the Lord Jesus! Will it be as a Savior, or as a Judge? Will He say to you, Come, ye blessed? or, Depart, ye cursed? Will you bow your knee to Him with joy in heaven; or with weeping in hell? Now He says,

Whosoever will, let Him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Then He will say,

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. . . . Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:24-29).

I have the keys of hell and of death?

What a comforting truth this is to the child of God! How impossible that one can sleep in death, or be laid in the grave, till Jesus unlocks the gates; and we may be assured He will open the gates for His loved ones at the best time, and it shall be neither too soon nor too late — neither shall the way be too easy nor too painful. How wonderfully does the heart of Jesus provide comfort for His fainting servant at His feet! How very sweetly He took away his fears! Oh, Christian reader! if you are almost ready to

Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections, Revelation 1:1-3: Introductory Verses (1:1-3)

The first words give us the title of the book — “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The first three verses are a kind of preface. We are reminded that the ascended Jesus, though invested with all power in heaven and in earth, is still Jehovah's righteous servant, and as such receives this book from God. John, not simply by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, as was usual, but by the guidance of an angel, receives the particulars of the book to communicate to the churches. We are told that the object of the Revelation is to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. (They are not called, as in John's other writings, the friends of Jesus, or sons of God, but servants.) To show the shortness of time in the mind of God, and the speedy fulfilment of the prophetic word, it is added in the third verse,

The time is at hand {Rev. 1:3}.

John writes with authority, being conscious that he is recording God's truth, and that the various scenes and actions he was about to relate were the testimony of Jesus Christ — things which he had heard and seen in vision (ver. 2).

An especial blessing is promised to those who hear (even if unable to read) (ver. 3). How encouraging! How different are man's thoughts to God's! Man says, Do not read the book of Revelation, it is so difficult; or do not listen to any who may read it to you. God says, Whether you read or hear you shall find blessing.

By keeping

those things which are written therein {Rev. 1:3},

we have not the thought of obeying commands, like the law of Moses, as much as keeping in the heart the solemn instruction which the prophetic word conveys. In this book, the future passes before the mind's eye like a panorama, shedding its light upon everything of the present, and pointing out the course of all the principles at work around us. All who keep these things in their hearts will find present blessing. We are told that Mary kept the sayings of Jesus in her heart. Jesus also spoke of this as a special mark of those who loved Him:

If a man love me, he will keep my words: . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings (John 14:23, 24).

Surely this is a searching word for the conscience of any who have neglected the sayings of Jesus contained in "The Revelation."

Verses 4 to 8 may be looked at as introductory to the great subjects of the book.

Seven churches in Asia are selected for John to address. He salutes them in the usual apostolic manner with

Grace unto you, and peace {Rev. 1:4}.

Observe the order. — not peace and grace, but "Grace unto you, and peace"; because peace always flows from grace, and our enjoyment of peace is entirely dependent on our apprehension of Divine grace. But it is not, as in other epistles, added, from God the Father, but

from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come {Rev. 1:4};

that is, from the eternal I AM; for this book is rather the dealings of God with man in the earth, than of the Father with His sons. Then we get,

From the seven Spirits which are before His throne {Rev. 1:4}.

As seven is a symbol of perfection, we have the Eternal Spirit in fullness in His various actings, rather than the indwelling and actings of the "one Spirit" in the Church, as in Ephesians (v. 4).

Lastly, it is from

Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness;

for every other witness has proved more or less unfaithful:

the first-begotten from the dead,

for He is the Son begotten in resurrection; the first who rose from the dead, never more to die; and He is also presented as

the Prince of the kings of the earth {Rev. 1:5},

because the book largely treats of kings, and other things of earth; hence His title and power are asserted. Immediately the glory, triumph, and dominion of Christ are spoken of, the Church seems at once exultingly to respond with,

Unto Him that loved [loveth] us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen {Rev. 1:5, 6}.

Notice in this song —

1st. They have the joy of present redemption.

2nd. That all true believers are priests — a royal priesthood;

and

3rd. That all is traced to Divine love, and flows to us through the blood-shedding and death of the Son of God. This fills the heart with joy, and the lips with praise (vv.5, 6).

In v. 7, the Lord's coming is presented to us according to the subject of the book in relation to the earth. His saints (of course) are with Him, having been previously caught up to meet Him in the air. The scene is Christ manifested in glory as the only Potentate. The last time the world saw Christ was on the Cross; the next time they see Him will be coming in the clouds of heaven. Then, in His own glory, the glory of the Father and of the holy angels, with all His saints changed and fashioned into His glorious likeness, with a dazzling brightness that is inconceivable,

every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

The Jews, too, shall

look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn {see Zech. 12:10};

while all the tribes of the earth in bitterest anguish wail, because Jesus is come to take vengeance, and put all enemies under His feet.

“Bright with all His Crowns of glory, See the royal Victor’s brow; Once for sinners marred and glory – See the Lamb exalted now; While before Him Every knee on earth must bow. “King of kings! let earth adore Him High on His exalted throne; Fall, ye nations, fall before Him, And His righteous sceptre own; All the glory Be to Him and Him alone!”

Happy those who can peacefully contemplate that day, and truly say,

Even so. Amen {Rev. 1:7}.

After we are thus instructed about the manifestation of Christ in glory, the announcement of His eternal Godhead closes the introduction (v. 8).

Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections, Revelation 1:9-20: The Things Which John Saw (1:9-20)

We now come, strictly speaking, to THE REVELATION. It is divided into three parts:

The things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,

or

after these things (v. 19).

The first division occupies the first chapter, from the twelfth to the seventeenth verses. These are the things which John had just seen.

John addresses himself, not as one in apostolic office, or as a member of the “one body,” the Church, but as a brother of all the servants of God, and their companion in the kingdom, now characterized by tribulation and by exercise of patience. The kingdom predicted by prophets promised peace and blessing, as will be known in millennial times; but the kingdom has hitherto been, and in the action of this book is marked with tribulation and evil by Satan’s power, although also by God’s blessing to His people, and will end in judgment, as we learn from Matt. 13:11, 42, 50, and other Scriptures. It is the kingdom of heaven in mystery. There is, therefore, need of patience until Jesus comes.

In the world ye shall have tribulation,

said Jesus;

but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world {John 16:33}.

The Lord’s aged and honored servant was banished to Patmos, a desolate island in the Grecian Archipelago, for the word of God and the testimony of Christ. Little, perhaps, did he think that the solitary and barren island would be a place for his being favored by God with such deep communion and astounding revelations. But so it was. Again the apostle proved that

before honour is humility {Prov. 15:33, 18:12},

and that God’s way of preparing us for special blessing is to bring low; as we sometimes say, “The way to exaltation is the dust”; and the thought is full of comfort to God’s tried and humbled children. Those who are exercised before God will usually find that the longer and deeper the time of trial, the richer the blessing that follows.

The apostle tells that he

was in the Spirit {Rev. 1:10}.

While all believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, we are not always “in the Spirit.” To be “in the Spirit” implies that the faculties of the soul are so under the power and unction of the Holy Ghost, as to enable us to discern and enter into the mind of God, and to be occupied with His things. This is an important practical point. It is to be feared that we often set about attending to spiritual matters in a carnal frame, and are content to know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, without being careful to be “in the Spirit.” We need the anointed eye, and a spiritual frame of soul, if we would profit others or enjoy the truth of God ourselves. By

the Lord’s day {Rev. 1:10}

we are not to understand “the day of the Lord,” but the first day of the week; the day which reminds us of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, of rest in a finished work, and triumph in a risen Head.

The first thing that arrested the attention of the apostle was the sound behind him of

a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches, etc. {Rev. 1:10, 11}.

Thus the person is announced, and the apostle’s service clearly marked out. This trumpet-like sound induced John to turn round to see what it was, when the glorious vision of one like unto the Son of man,

in the midst of seven golden candlesticks {see Rev. 1:13},

was immediately brought before him. With regard to the candlesticks, we are told

The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20);

thus we do not get here the doctrine of “the Church,” the body of Christ, “one body,” “one new man,” and such-like expressions, but “seven churches”; because the vision has regard to those who bear the name of Christ in earthly circumstances, and in responsibility to Christ, rather than the one body, or as seated in heavenly places in Christ, as we find treated of in Ephesians. The Lord is therefore seen

in the midst {Rev. 1:13}.

This is His promised place.

Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

The thought, however, of the one body of Christ is in a certain sense included, inasmuch as there was but one candlestick in one city — no division. In fact, the idea of different churches in one city is nowhere found in Scripture, while division, or a sectarian position, is most solemnly condemned. The Church, therefore, composed of all the believers in a city, as in Ephesus for instance, was a golden candlestick, — costly, precious, and valuable as gold, and a fit vessel for bearing light. Such is the Church of God. It has no light in itself — nothing but what is bestowed by the ascended Jesus.

Christ is seen in the midst of the “golden candlesticks,” and that, too, in the character of a discernor and judge in His own house, the only time we have Him in such a character, with readiness to bless and encourage, as well as to correct. And I cannot exclude the thought, that His first being presented as

like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle {Rev. 1:13},

is to remind us that He is also a merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing High Priest. By

His head and hairs white like wool, as white as snow,

we are taught that He not only bears the marks of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7), but is infinitely pure and holy; while

His eyes, as a flame of fire {Rev. 1:14},

are all searching, from whose notice nothing can escape. His almighty power to put all enemies under His feet, and trample them in His fury, may be brought out by

His feet, like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;

and

His voice, as the sound of many waters {Rev. 1:15},

may teach us that His mighty voice may be heard far and wide as the thunders of the fall of Niagara; for unto Him is given all power in heaven and in earth.

Nor are the assemblies to forget that

out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword {Rev. 1:16},

by which He can execute judgments (Rev. 2:16). His countenance, the bright effulgence of glory and uncreated light, was

Such is Christ’s present place among the churches. Though, strictly speaking, no company of Christians can now lay claim to be the candlestick in any place, because of our sinful divisions and sects, yet we can always count upon His presence, if really

gathered together in His name (Matt. 18:20).

But while we are assured of His presence, we should never forget our responsibility to Him as the Head of the body, and Master of His own house (Heb. 3:6).

Verse 17. The effect of this glorious vision of Christ on the beloved apostle he then describes:

When I saw HIM, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

Overpowered with the glimpse of the glorified Son of man, the mortal powers gave way; but it was only to bring out the grace and tenderness of Him who was so precious to the apostle’s heart. The

right hand

of Jesus was soon laid on His servant, now fallen prostrate at His feet, and the comforting words fell from His gracious lips,

Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death {Rev. 1:17, 18}.

Thus, by the eye and heart being again fixed on the triumphant Savior, who conquered death and hell for him, and by the Lord's tender assurance that He was his loving Savior, and that there was no ground for fear, John was comforted, and then instructed to write what he had just seen.

as the sun shineth in his strength {Rev. 1:16}.

By

the seven stars in His right hand {see Rev. 1:16},

we are taught not only that He is the Source, but the Sustainer of all ministry to the Church.

He gave gifts unto men {Eph. 4:8},

and in His power alone they can be exercised for true profit. Christ is presented to us as judging the churches, as Peter tells judgment must begin at the house of God {1 Pet. 4:17}.

It is quite unscriptural to call a building of brick and stone a "sanctuary," or "house of God." God's people, the members of Christ, now are God's house; it is composed of living stones, and Christ judges both individually and corporately. Blessed it is to know that the Master's rule is

If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged {1 Cor. 11:31};

but it is very solemn, that

when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world {1 Cor. 11:32}.

Like the true antitype of Aaron, Christ trims the lamps, removes the hindrances to the bright burning of the light, pours in oil, and never extinguishes the feeble glimmer of little faith. Christ must have realities.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Free Grace; or, Living Water (22:1)

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

There is peculiar solemnity in the closing chapters of the Revelation. Salvation and damnation, life and death, grace and judgment, glory and eternal torment, are the subjects of it; and whether the scene is heavenly glory, or the throne of eternal judgment, the LAMB stands most conspicuous and exalted.

Few people read the Revelation. The excuse of many is that it is so difficult to understand; whereas its title expresses its simplicity. Revelation does not mean that which is difficult, but something revealed, or made plain; but the truth is, that however simple God's word is, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

The neglect of this book, even by professing Christians, is very sad, notwithstanding it is our Lord's last letter to His beloved servants — God's last written communication to man — and that it is prefaced with,

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand (Rev. 1:3).

Dear friends, how is it that we so neglect the Revelation of Jesus Christ?

It is wonderful how God blesses the reading of this book. Many a soul has been awakened through reading or hearing the things that are therein written; many a troubled conscience has been quieted and comforted by seeing, in the visions of glory there presented to us, that redeemed sinners are around the throne of God solely on the ground of the blood of the Lamb; while others have been preserved from ten thousand snares of the devil, by keeping the things that are written therein. Nothing shows more plainly the real importance of this book than the command in the last chapter,

Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand (Rev. 22:10);

and also,

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).

What are we to understand by keeping the sayings of the prophecy of this book? Surely this book does not present to us a list of absolute commands to be obeyed, like the law of Moses did. No. It does, however, present to us the working out in result of the great principles seen around us, and so shows us the difference between truth and error, the bride and the harlot, Christ and Satan, in such astonishing ways, that it greatly helps and guides us in our heavenward journey, when we keep those sayings in our minds, before our eyes, and in our hearts.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is divided into three parts.

1. The things which John saw.
2. The things which are.
3. The things which shall be after these.

The verse before us is among the things which are yet future. The apostle had been carried away into a great and exceeding high mountain, to behold the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and he saw her

descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God (Rev. 21:10, 11).

We know, from other Scriptures, that prior to this she will be

caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).

Now John saw her coming forth in heavenly glory, manifested to the earthly nations; having been made partaker of the grace of God, she now shares with Christ the glory of God. She is presented to us under the symbol of a city. But I do not now propose to enter into that, but immediately proceed to our verse:

And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

This is still a part of the description of the heavenly Jerusalem; for the next verse speaks of

the street of it (Rev. 22:2),

evidently identifying it with what had gone before in the previous chapter.

But what, I ask, does the water of life represent? Have we any Scripture proof as to what the water of life means? Let us see, and may the Lord graciously help us.

In turning to the gospel by John, it is said of Christ, in the first chapter,

In Him was life (John 1:4),

and that He was

full of grace and truth; (John 1:14)

and in various other Scriptures, life and grace are found together. For instance, in Rom. 5 we read, that

grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by

Jesus Christ our Lord.

In 1 Pet. 3:7, we read of

the grace of life.

In Rom. 8:2, of the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

My reader will remember how the Lord Himself spoke to the sinful Samaritan woman about the necessity of drinking living water, in order to find peace and joy.

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water (John 4:10).

Here we see Him who was the life, the dispenser of living water to a sinner dead in trespasses and sins; and He also speaks of the effects of this living water in the soul. Speaking of the water of Jacob's well, He saith,

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:10).

In the previous chapter our Lord had told Nicodemus the Pharisee, not only of the eternal importance of the new birth, but that it consisted of being born of water and of the Spirit, which was known only to those who believed in the Son of man lifted up; and the chapter concludes with the most positive declaration, that to be without Christ is to be without life. In the fifth of John we have Christ presented to us as the quickener of whom He will, and He declares that he that heareth His word, and believes on Him that sent Him, hath everlasting life, and is passed from death unto life. The resurrection of believers is there called

the resurrection of life (John 5:29);

and the reproof of Christ is, that persons would not come unto Him, that they might have life. In the next chapter we again see Christ as the dispenser of living water — eternal life — promising life for evermore to every one that comes to Him, and saying,

The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life (John 6:63);

and when Peter was asked if he would go away, he exclaimed,

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

The seventh chapter shows us that Christ is the fountain to satisfy the thirsty soul, and also that living water, taken in by faith, sinks deep into the feelings and affections, and is felt to be so precious and abundant, as to flow out copiously to those around.

If any man thirst,

said Jesus,

let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:37, 38).

Would that we knew more of this in our day, beloved! Why is it that there is not more testimony to Christ? but because we so little go unto Him and drink. The tenth chapter of John shows us that the sheep have life only through the death of the Good Shepherd, teaching us that Jesus crucified is the only fountain of living water. In the next chapter we see Jesus the life-giver, and raiser of the dead, eminently set forth; while the 12th chapter still more plainly shows us that life and union with Christ could only have come to us through His death.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

In the 14th chapter Christ is emphatically called

the Life (John 14:6);

and the next chapter shows us that fruit-bearing to the glory of the Father is only by living union with Christ the Life; and to pass on to the 20th chapter, after the person, death, and resurrection of Christ have been set before us, the Holy Ghost, by John, says,

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name (John 20:31).

The water of life, then, is God's blessed grace unto life eternal, flowing out to man as a sinner through Christ, whether a profligate Samaritan, or an outwardly decent Pharisee. Like the river in Eden was to water the ground, so living water is blessing, eternal blessing, to the poor and needy. This seems to me proved from the many Scriptures already quoted; and perhaps the endless occupation and joy of the Church of God will be perpetually drinking this living water; ever having unfolded to us more and more of the love of God, and our souls ever rejoicing before Him with fullness of joy, when we shall sing —

“For ever of His grace, For ever of His love”;

being abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and made to drink of the river of His pleasure: for the Lamb Himself will be to us a fountain of living water.

But let us look a little more carefully at our verse, and notice first the ORIGIN of this living water —

proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

God is the God of grace, and Jesus Christ is full of grace. Grace, like every other good gift, is from above, and it flows to us through Jesus crucified, risen, and ascended; as we sometimes sing —

“To Jesus we our praises bring, For grace proceeds from Him.”

Many confound grace in them with the grace brought to them, and they have not peace. They must look clean out of themselves, and receive righteousness and peace from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. They will find their conscience purged only by His blood. We must first drink living water, before it can spring up in us, or flow out from us. We must receive grace for us to have peace in us.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation (Titus 2:11);

and when the apostles wrote to their fellow-Christians, they usually commenced with

Grace unto you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, grace proceedeth

out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev.22:1).

It is eternal in its source, and carries our thoughts back to God's

purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9);

and being eternal in its source, it is abundant, unchanging, and everlasting, in its operations; hence we read,

By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

Yea, God Himself is

the God of all grace (1 Pet. 5:10);

and this is the glory of the gospel; it is called

the glorious gospel (or the gospel of the glory), of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11).

Could we but look into the heart of the invisible God, we should see thoughts of grace and peace to men as sinners, counsels of eternal redemption between the persons of the Godhead, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost. Jesus came to manifest this, and His death upon the cross was the outflowing of divine grace; a

pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

Happy those who drink freely!

2. Observe that the water is living; it is called

water of life.

Ah, dear reader, nothing less than life, life eternal, could meet the need of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. The law could not make us righteous, or give us life; it only made manifest our sin. But Jesus came to give life. He was the overflowing fountain of living water, and whosoever drank

passed from death unto life (John 5:24).

It is not life for a day or two, like the manna was to the hungry Israelites; no! it is everlasting life that Christ dispenses. He could say,

Oh, the depths of the riches of the grace of God! There is not only mercy with God, but with Him is plenteous redemption (Psa. 130:7).

The figure of a river is very beautiful. Its origin is hidden, but the further you trace it from its source, the wider and deeper it becomes. So is the grace of God in Christ; yea, Jesus is full of grace. We none of us know much of its depth, and height, and length, and breadth; but this we know, that the longer we live, the more we feel that we need the glorious truths of the sovereign and unchanging grace of God to sustain us, and the more we enter into its vastness. And so we believe it will be; for yesterday the Holy Spirit said,

He giveth more grace (James 4:6);

to-day He says,

He giveth more grace;

to-morrow it will be,

He giveth more grace;

He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:58),

never see death (John 8:51),

never perish (John 10:28),

not come into condemnation, &c. (John 5:24).

In Ezek. 47, where we find a counterpart of the heavenly Jerusalem, in the prophetic testimony concerning the earthly Jerusalem, we read that

every thing shall live whithersoever the river cometh (see Ezek. 47:9);

and so is the Lord Jesus who was crucified. You cannot come to Him, dear reader, for salvation without living for ever.

He that cometh to me,

saith Jesus,

shall never hunger; and He that believeth in me shall never thirst (John 6:35).

Oh, beloved friends, this is a deep reality! Receiving Christ into the heart as a Savior is always connected with present comfort, and eternal blessing. A sense of peace, the new birth, present possession of life eternal, are connected with drinking living water—

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (it is new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17).

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren (1 John 3:14).

Oh, ye feeble-minded, halting, fainting, doubting, fearing children of God! be comforted, be happy, be assured by the word of the living God, that you live for ever, because you believe on the Lord Jesus; you have tasted the grace of God in Christ, you have drunk the living water, and your heart goes upward to the blood-stained mercy-seat, outward in love to God's people, and onward to the coming glory waiting for God's Son from heaven. Fear not; Jesus now intercedes for you in heaven.

3. This water is also abundant; not a pool, but a "river," as Ezekiel's river,
a river to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over (see Ezek. 47:5).

and the next day still it will be,

He giveth more grace;

and so on, until we see Jesus face to face, and find ourselves eternally happy in the bosom of His matchless grace.

4. But notice further, that this water is also pure. There is sometimes mercy among men when guilt is proved, and the stain not cleansed. A prisoner is proved guilty of a capital offence and condemned to die; but just before the expected execution a reprieve is sent, and though the prisoner's life is spared, the stain of guilt remains — there is pardon, but not purity. But the grace of God is pure; it is clean, and makes clean. Grace reigns through righteousness. God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth. God is pure, Christ is pure, the believer is pure — his heart is purified by faith; he is cleansed from all sin, justified from all things.

Again, God's grace is pure, because of its perfection. It is not a mixture of man's doings and God's work, not a compound of law and grace, but pure grace, the simple outflowing of the heart of the pure and holy God, freely giving remission of sins to every one that believeth, because Christ has died upon the cross under the judgment of our sins. Oh, dear children of God, do not try to join together law and gospel! There is an amazing distinction between them. No two things can more differ.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The deadliest cup of poison that Satan can present to a sinner is a mixture of law and gospel. The mixture sets aside both law and gospel. Blessed be God, the water of life is pure; let us beware of any corruption of the pure doctrine of the unmerited love of God.

5. Lastly, the water of life is presented to us as

clear as crystal (Rev. 22:1);

which, I apprehend, teaches us not only that it is pure and transparent, but also that it is glorious. When John saw the holy city, it was like unto a stone most precious — even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (Rev. 21:11).

Ah, dear reader, the grace of God is truly glorious; hence we read of the

glory of His grace (Eph. 1:6).

The Lord will give grace and glory (Psa. 84:11).

There is majesty in grace; for heaven's throne is called

the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

Yes, it flows from the eternal counsels of God, and redounds to His eternal glory; and in ages yet to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. The Lamb will be ever loving and ever refreshing His people.

And now, dear Christians, let us remind each other that salvation is by grace alone, from first to last.

By grace are ye saved through faith (Eph. 2:8).

Here let us abide. Our eternal occupation will be drinking more deeply these streams of living water; then let us now, under the Spirit's teaching, seek to learn more and more of the love of our God to us. This alone will cheer us when sad, and lift us up when faint, keep us humble before God, make us sympathizing and tender toward others, and strong for the service of God and conflict with Satan. Grace alone enables us to bring forth fruit unto God.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation . . . teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, &c. (Titus 2:11-14).

Oh, beloved! this pure river is ever flowing, and when we feel barren and dark, it is not because God hath forgotten to be gracious, but because we have forgotten His grace. Oh, think often of the riches of grace! Surely it is a river to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over. There is no sinking here; for

He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength (Isa. 40:29).

Oh to be

strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1)!

for —

Now let me address myself to the unconverted. You have heard of the Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for sinners, as the Giver of living water, and be assured that there is salvation in no other. Like the rock that was smitten in the wilderness, to give water to the thirsty people to save them from death, so Christ who was crucified is a river of life, and every needy soul that comes to Him finds it to be so of a truth. Are you, my reader, thirsting for forgiveness of sins, and peace with God? Are you not saying, Oh that I could find rest for my troubled conscience? If so, come just as you are to the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive those eternal blessings that God so freely gives to sinners. Like the prophet to Israel, we are ready to cry,

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isa. 55:1).

But I fear you are a careless sinner; you hear as if you heard not. You do not care to come to Christ that you might have life. Oh, you little think that Jesus said,

He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

Oh, Christless soul! remember that

the wrath of God abideth on you (see John 3:36).

You may lie down on your bed this night and sleep, but, alas! the wrath of God abideth on you. You may go to your business or pleasure on the morrow with a smiling countenance, but the wrath of God abideth on you. Time may roll over you, and you may find yourself on a sick bed; kind friends wait upon you, and smooth your dying pillow; but you have no consolation — the wrath of God abideth on you. Your weakness increases, your limbs rapidly emaciate, your strength declines quickly, your flesh quivers, the joints of your back are loosed, your breathing becomes more and more difficult, and, solemn to relate, when the vital chord is snapped by the chilly hand of death, then you will awfully and eternally prove that the wrath of God abideth on you. Oh that you may now take warning, and flee from the wrath to come! Do you not know that almost the last words in the Bible are,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17)?

If, when thirsty, you passed near some sparkling, crystal-like fountain of water, and saw it labelled, “Drink freely,” would you not taste the pure, clear stream? Then why will you any longer reject the water of life? why will you be deaf to that loving voice which says,

I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely (Rev. 21:6)?

Oh, my reader, Jesus is quickly coming! If you do not turn to Him now, He will, He must, come upon you with fiery wrath; for He will soon be revealed . . . from heaven in flaming fire (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections, Revelation 21:9-22:6: The Bride, the Lamb’s Wife (22:1-6)

We now come to the last section of this solemn Book. As in former instances, so now, the seer is led back again, for he is to learn the position and glory of the Church in the millennial age.

I here repeat what was mentioned when considering the seventeenth chapter, that it appears as if the same angel that showed to John the mystery of THE GREAT WHORE, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, now, in widest possible contrast, points to THE BRIDE, THE LAMB’S WIFE. To see the former, he was led into the wilderness; for the latter he had to look up towards heaven. Both needed the power of the Spirit to be discerned. As the harlot was likened to a city, so is the bride. The false thing was symbolized by a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth; the bride of the Lamb is also called that great city. We need not the Holy Ghost to see literal cities: the natural vision is enough for that. The things of God are discerned only by the Spirit of God. The book of Revelation abundantly teaches us this.

The heavenly calling and standing of the Church of God is often noticed in the epistles of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Even now we are spoken of as

partakers of the heavenly calling {Heb. 3:1},

as quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; in the eternal state, we saw the bride coming down from God out of heaven; and in connection with millennial glory, John saw,

that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God {Rev. 21:10}.

If Jerusalem means, as is generally considered, “a dwelling in peace,” we can easily understand why the bride is so called. Securely fixed upon the peacemaking, peace-speaking power of the blood of Jesus, she knows now the full enjoyment of

peace with God {Rom. 5:1},

and

the peace of God {Phil. 4:7},

under the everlasting shelter of

the God of peace {Heb. 13:20, 21}.

Holy city {Rev. 21:10, {see New Trans., JND}}

becomes her, because holiness characterizes her, and no false or defiling thing can enter there (Rev. 21:27). She is

new Jerusalem {Rev. 3:12; 21:2},

because that city which should have been a dwelling of peace, a glory and praise in the earth, became spiritually Sodom and Egypt; They knew not the Prince of peace; they crucified the Lord of glory; they refused the gospel of peace, the forgiveness of sins; and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Hence that city, Jerusalem, could not be a dwelling of peace. No marvel, then, that we find the counsels of Divine grace teaching us about a new Jerusalem. It is a great {rather, "holy"} city, because it comprehends all the members of the body of Christ. It comes out of heaven, because the saints, having previously been translated to the Father's house, are now manifested to the praise of the glory of Divine grace; then the world will know what they are so ignorant of now, that the Father hath loved us even as He loved Jesus. It comes

from God {Rev. 21:10},

because Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, and we have been made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, and by His blood. Christ Himself is our righteousness; our life is hid with Christ in God, and He has given us the glory which the Father gave Him; — hence it is now noticed that John saw the bride,

having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

What wondrous heights of grace! and yet those heights were counselled in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Can we think, beloved, of anything higher or more blessed for any creature than this?

It may be asked by some, What proof have you that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the Church? I give, in reply, the following reasons: —

1. The Church is taught to expect to be manifested to the world, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us-ward through Christ Jesus.

2. The twelve foundations, having in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, seem to identify this city with one of the special characters of the Church, which, we are told in Ephesians, is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, that is, that they were the doctrinal founders of the Church.

3. It is evidently a symbolic and not a literal city, for the seer is not summoned to behold a city, but the bride, the Lamb's wife. He looks for her. In what imagery she would be presented in the vision he could not say; his soul was prepared by the angel for a vision of the Lamb's wife. It is clearly, then, a symbolic city. It is not even a city where the bride should dwell. He is called to see the bride, and he beholds her in the symbol of a city. In the contrast of the harlot, as before noticed, he also saw a symbolic city — a city in which was found the blood of all that were slain on the earth — a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. How is it possible to apply such language literally? Besides, the dimensions of the golden city are given, and can we imagine a literal city coming down from God out of heaven 12,000 furlongs; or 1500 miles in height? We know, too, how symbolic language abounds in the book of Revelation.

and Morning Star, we are immediately told that

the Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17},

Now I ask, Can such a posture of soul be ascribed to any but the Church of God? To whom else has He been revealed as the bright and Morning Star? and who else has had, or ever will have, such a hope? The Jewish remnant will by-and-by long for Messiah to come, to bring them into their inheritance and kingdom, but they will know Him as the Sun of righteousness, bringing healing to Israel, and trampling their enemies in His fury; they will cry to God to send down vengeance on those around them, as many of the Psalms teach us. But the bride not only deeply longs in ardent affection for the Lord Himself,

the bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)

which comes before sunrise, but she throws her arms wide open, in the spirit of the Savior of sinners, and cries to the Christless and godless around her, saying

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Let the reader attentively consider whether with these facts it is possible to think of the bride being any other than the Church of God!

5. The calling and expectation of the Church is that of eternal union with Christ. Christ is said to make in Himself of twain

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

— He the Head and we the members; so that we are even now

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

We are told that

Christ . . . loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25, 27-29, 32).

Would not such a Scripture lead us to expect that the Church of God would have a distinct character as the bride, the Lamb's wife?

6. The gold and precious stones that abound in this city are figures used by the Holy Ghost to symbolise true saints on a former occasion. In 1 Cor. 3, when building upon the foundation laid, which is Jesus Christ, is considered, the apostle warns labourers in the gospel against accrediting persons as on that blessed foundation who are merely of the earth earthy, and not partakers of eternal life, not born from above; only wood, hay, and stubble, instead of being heavenly and divine — gold, silver, and precious stones. Thus we are not surprised to find this holy city, new Jerusalem, of pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones (Rev. 21:18, 19).

Are not these reasons sufficient for our concluding that the Church and bride are identical? We know that all the saints who are in the first resurrection will be in the reign with Christ in millennial glory, though that is not contemplated here, because the subject is specially the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Church, as the candlestick, may be shattered; but as the Lamb's wife she shall live; and this golden city is the Bride of the Lamb, the Church of God now manifested in her perfectness. . . . She is the habitation of the glory of God, the place of the throne, a sanctuary, too, as well as a palace, having a presence within her which makes the whole scene a temple. Thus is she the suited dwelling-place of kings and priests; and being thus in herself the beautiful one, and bearing with her this honor of the royal priesthood, all that goes forth from her, or enters into her, or dwells there, is according to these things. Light is shed from her, that the nations may walk therein: water from the river of life flows from her, bearing leaves with it, that the nations may be healed thereby; and all that goes in is purity; and all who dwell within are in joy and dignity, having no need of candle, nor even light of the sun, being also in the conscious dignity of their everlasting kingdom; and nothing must touch such a habitation of holiness and gladness and glory, but the very honor of the kings of the earth. They may bring up their glory and honor unto it, but nothing less than that can approach it."

The kingdom is here displayed in its holy order and righteous authority. It is the golden city we get, the symbol of righteousness and power united in government — the Church, with the enthroned Lamb descending out of heaven to take association with the earth, ruling it and yet blessing it, presiding over it in righteousness, and yet dispensing to it the water of life, and the light of the glory, of the very fountains of which she had now become the scene and the dwelling-place."

"Fair distant land, could now our eyes
But half its charms explore,
How would our spirits long to rise,
And dwell on earth no more!"

The jasper wall, great and high, tells us not only of glory and beauty in keeping with every other part of the city, but also of security and separation; and if of the earthly city it will be said,

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces {Psa. 122:7},

how much more will this heavenly city be the place of endless peace and unchanging blessing? There is something Divine, something consistent with the glory of God, in the symbol of the jasper wall; for we find, in the vision of the presence of God on the throne in the fourth chapter, that the One who sat upon the throne was like a jasper and a sardine stone.

The twelve foundations show its perfect stability: perfect, I say, for it was also twelve times twelve, or a hundred and forty-four cubits high. But it is human, and not Divine, perfection; for it was according to man's measure, that is, the angel's. (Rev. 21:17). We find twelve frequently used as a symbol of perfection in human affairs. We have twelve hours in a day, twelve months in a year, twelve tribes of Israel. This city, too, is remarkably made up of twelves; it has twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve angels. Whichever way it is measured, its length, breadth, and height are each twelve thousand furlongs. The shape of the city, therefore, is a cube. This shows it is perfect, that there is no inequality, nothing wanting. The street (not streets) of the city, emblem of the place of traffic and walk, which on earth is always the place of defilement, is here characterized by perfect purity, transparency, and that which is Divine and righteous. All is light and holiness, and peace.

O sweet and pleasant soil!
In thee no sorrow can be found,
No grief, no care, no toil."

The twelve gates always open, seen in each direction, north, south, east, and west, tell us, too, of administrative government. The gate of a city, in Scripture language, is the place of rule, power, and judgment. Hence we get the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written thereon. We must remember here, that though the scene is simply one of the bride, the Lamb's wife, yet the period is the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Others will be associated in the reign with the bride, though not distinctively of her; for we have been previously taught, that all who are in

the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

live and reign with Christ. In that day, too, heaven will be truly God's throne, and the earth His footstool, yet the place of His feet shall be glorious. It will be glory above and glory below, each distinct, and yet one whole kingdom-scene of power and glory; for the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. When the heavens are thus opened, angels of God will be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man. All His various relationships shall then be sustained in infinite beauty, order, perfection, and truth. As the last Adam, Head of the body, Bridegroom of the Church, King of Israel, Governor among the nations, King over all the earth, He shall wear His

many crowns and dispense His manifold blessings; and as He, the Upholder of all things, now sustains the mighty planets in their various revolutions, so then, when all things are gathered together in one, both things on earth and things in heaven, even in Him, there shall still be diversity, even as in creation's fair history it is recorded that every fruit tree yielded fruit after his kind.

The kings of the earth bring their glory to or unto this city. Those dwelling there eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7). The leaves of the tree minister healing to the nations, which is enlightened by the glory of the city. It will be a chain of golden links of rich and varied blessings, each part of the different kingdom spheres dependent one on another, and all dependent on the Lord.

It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel (Hos.2:21, 22),

the seed of God.

The living water, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, pure and clear, flows copiously like a river, deepening and widening in its progress, through this city of heavenly blessing. All drink plentiful draughts of its endless, exhaustless depths of grace. Each sees the face of Jesus, and bears His name in the forehead; and then will be realized more fully what we know in some little measure now, that

the joy of the Lord is our strength {see Neh. 8:10};

for service will still flow from a joyful heart in ministry to the need of the nations. And out of this city shall flow judgment, and, doubtless, blessing too, to the favoured tribes of Israel's land: for our Lord's promise to the apostle was, that in the regeneration, which is the time we are considering,

Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

restored Israel will be almost a counterpart of the heavenly city: and among other similitudes, water will so flow out from under the threshold of the house of the Lord, as to become so deep and wide as to form a river to swim in, and which will give life to every thing whithersoever the river shall come. Nor is this the only idea of life and blessing in connection with the times of restitution, the period of Israel's glory; for we are told, that

by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine (Ezek. 47:12).

Then Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Out of the earthly city shall flow earthly glory, government, and blessing. The inhabitants of Zion shall be joyful in their King, while they and the saved nations walk in the light of the golden city. Then

the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3).

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee (Psa. 22:27).

Creation, too, will rejoice in her liberty from the groaning and bondage of corruption, at the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22). The Lord then, sitting upon the throne of His father David, shall judge the people in righteousness, and the poor with judgment. (See Psa. 72.)

The pearly gates and variety of precious stones and gold that mark the structure of this symbolic city show us how costly are its materials; and when we think that it is the bride, the Lamb's wife, her priceless value in God's sight, the cost, the unutterable cost of that city is forced upon our minds. When none else could redeem, we know that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a price! What costly stones are sinners saved by the blood of the Lamb! How precious they must be to the heart of the Lord Jesus!

"Oh yes, Christ loves the Church, 'Tis her He lives to bless; He cannot love her more, Nor will He love her less; Bone of His bone, cleansed by His word, A bride adorned meet for her Lord."

It is interesting to observe the Scripture notices of "gold" and "precious stones," so largely characteristic of this heavenly city.

When this fair creation came fresh from the Maker's hands, we are told that Eden not only had a river flowing through it to water the garden, but that it had gold and bdellium and the onyx stone; or as the inspired prophet by the river of Chebar more fully expresses it,

Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold (Ezek. 28:13).

Creation then was something on which God's eye and heart could rest, and pronounce very good. But sin came in and marred this beautiful, spotless universe. It was soon overrun with the foul spirit of the prince of darkness, and we see not the precious stones and gold brought into prominence until there was something introduced in which God could again delight. The tabernacle and priesthood, in connection with an elect people, bring precious stones again before us in settings of gold. The breastplate and shoulder-pieces of the high priest were resplendent with the dazzling glory of the costly stones in their gold inclosures. They were a shadow of good things to come. They pictured glory as resulting from Divine grace through the redemption work of Jesus. But soon again these shadowy jewels passed away. A dark history set in, and the holy Son of God, the tried stone and the precious stone, was found here in veiled glory, a stranger and despised One in this

world that He had fashioned. He wore no jewels, for He Himself was the precious corner stone. His glory was in humiliation and rejection as the righteous and holy One. His beauty and glory were hid from the carnal eye; but once and again heaven opened to declare,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17; 17:5}.

The glory of His humiliation and death will shine eternally in untarnished lustre. His sufferings and sacrifice were the golden chains of Divine love to unite us to God for ever.

“That visage marred, those sorrows deep, The vinegar and gall; These were the golden chains of love, His captives to enthral.”

But His sufferings are over. He has accomplished eternal redemption. He is now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor. We get no more mention of “gold” and “precious stones” till we read of true saints, those who are not “wood, hay, and stubble,” merely of earth’s growth, but those who are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

It is interesting, however, to observe, that the devil, who mimics God whenever he can, so as most effectually to deceive, uses gold and precious stones. He misplaces the type, to blind souls to the antitype. The gospel declares that Christ is a precious stone, and that believers in Him are precious stones also. But Satan says, No. He adorns Babylon with all manner of precious stones, and furnishes her with a golden cup by which to intoxicate and deceive. The true believer knows nothing “precious,” apart from Christ. He Himself is “precious,” His blood is precious, faith is precious, because it links us on to Him, and the trial of faith is precious, because it will be found to His praise and honor at His appearing.

Again, however, there will be that on which the eye and heart of God can rest. Israel, His earthly people, shall yet be numbered up as His jewels, and introduced into terrestrial glory; and the bride, the Lamb’s wife, shall be in heavenly glory, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It is permanent, lasting blessing. The new creation shall have eternal lustre, all flowing from the wondrous sufferings and death of the Lamb of God. Fair and comely in His sight, she shall be manifested as established in everlasting blessing and security before God. We can understand then, I think, why “gold” and “precious stones” are here again used, — to show the priceless value, stability, and glory of those who are so loved by God, and brought into such unchanging nearness to Him through the blood of the Lamb.

No temple is seen here, because all are at home with God and the Lamb. A temple always gives the idea of the worshiper being at a distance from God; He is as it were enshrined, because of His holiness. Even now a temple is out of place for those who are made nigh by the blood of Christ, and therefore have right and title, through the rent veil, to approach God Himself, because of that one Sacrifice which was once offered, and the ever living High Priest. The seer therefore tells us, when contemplating the glorious vision of this holy city,

I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (Rev. 21:22).

Nor was there any need of created light; whether of sun or moon, nor of artificial light — no need of the candle; for there shall be no night there; and also because

the Lord God giveth them light (Rev. 22:5)

—

the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:23).

There is a remarkable similarity between the scene of the first man in blessing in Eden and the holy Jerusalem. We are told that in creation’s primal glory there was a river and gold and precious stones, a happy created universe, a tree of life, the man and his wife. A progeny also is contemplated —

Be fruitful, and multiply {Gen. 1:28}.

The Lord God is mentioned too, in connection with all, and finding rest in all. There was also the tree of knowledge, as a test of man’s faithfulness. In the closing scene of the Apocalypse we have a river of life, gold and precious stones, circles of glory and blessing extending over the kingdom, the tree of life (much of which description is doubtless symbolical language) and the Lord God, the throne of God and the Lamb, the Bride the Lamb’s wife in connection with it all. But here there is no tree of knowledge; for man had been tried in various ways, and always found to be incapable of standing, except as upheld by God. So now; being made to stand upon the everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, his perfect security rests on the ground of redemption. There shall therefore be no more curse. How precious the blood of Christ is, and should be, to us!

“O precious blood! O glorious death! By which the sinner lives; When stung with sin this blood we view. And all our joy revives. “The blood that makes His glorious Church From every blemish free; And oh, the riches of His love, He poured it out for me! “The Father’s everlasting love, And Jesu’s precious blood, Shall be our endless themes of praise In yonder blest abode”

Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections, Revelation 22:6-21: Concluding Verses (22:6-21)

As we had introductory remarks to the sayings of the prophecy of this book, so we find concluding statements which appear as postscripts to a letter. The prominent thought in them is the Lord’s announcement to the assemblies of His own speedy coming. This is what we should have expected. What so welcome to the members of His body as Himself! It would have been strange for our Lord to have given us various details of things coming upon the earth, without plainly keeping before us our proper hope — the one hope of our calling. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets was wont to guide them to conclude their testimonies with earth’s only hope — the day of the Lord — Messiah’s reign — the

times of restitution which follow righteous judgments; but in the apocalyptic testimony to the assemblies, we find the relief for the heart oppressed by the sorrows coming upon the children of men, is the Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself.

In order to leave no room for question, as to the reality and accomplishment of this prophetic book, we are assured that

these sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done (Rev. 22:6).

Thus the Divine character of the prophetic testimony is attested, and the introductory announcement repeated, that these things will shortly come to pass. Time hurries on with rapid flight. Events follow in such quick succession, that eternal realities will soon dawn upon a slumbering world. How secretly, yet surely, the leaven of infidelity is diffusing itself! How rapidly the spirit of irreverence for the things of God, and desire for the exaltation of man, are growing! What patronage, too, the great harlot is receiving! How many seem satisfied to have their intellects amused and senses intoxicated with the adulterous wine, because it still allows the heart to maintain its enmity against God, and leaves the conscience unmoved by its sin and guilt; and with what increasing boldness among all nations she holds out the golden cup, brimful of all manner of filthiness, to the myriads of passers by! These things are enough to show us how soon the apocalyptic prophecies may be accomplished, and how unmistakably we see the day approaching.

What effect, beloved, should these things have upon us whose citizenship is in heaven, but to look for the Savior! What else can meet the need of our hearts? Hence the next words are,

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

because it is Christ who is our hope; not events, but the Lord Himself.

"For thee, His royal Bride, for thee, His brightest glories shine; And, happier still, His changeless love, With all its joy; is thine."

John tells us that he saw and heard these things, and that the effect of seeing and hearing them was most overpowering. And not only so; for, alas! how weak is man! how little can any of us bear! how badly can we be trusted! Again we find this honored seer at the angel's feet, a worshiper of that bright messenger who had showed him these things. Again the honored vessel came between him and the Lord. He idolizes the instrument; he worships the creature, though he did it ignorantly. He might have thought that this heavenly messenger was Jesus. Solemn lesson for us. Alas! how true it is that we are kept by the power of God. The angel, however, is more faithful than the loved and aged seer, and rebukes him for his folly.

Then saith he, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and [the fellow-servant] of thy brethren the prophets. Worship God (Rev. 22:8, 9).

Would, beloved, that we might be instructed by this angel to be more ready than we are to refuse everything that robs God of what belongs to Him and that we had a deeper sense in our souls of what is due to Christ, so as to be alone jealous for His glory. This surely is the only way of realizing present blessing.

The prophet Daniel was told to go his way, because

the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12);

but John is told to

seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand (Rev. 22:10).

The things here revealed are therefore to be published; men are both to be instructed and warned, because the time is so very near. How important and necessary it is, therefore, for those who would be faithful servants of Christ to be well acquainted with the things here revealed; for they are no longer to be sealed, but to be made known. A few more fleeting moments and man's eternal doom will be for ever fixed; and though myriads of ages roll on, the sentence will be,

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still (Rev. 22:11).

Those who now act so unjustly toward the God of all grace and His only-begotten Son, the Savior of sinners, will then ever be among the unjust. Let ten thousand times ten thousand years pass, and still it will be said,

He which is filthy, let him be filthy still (Rev. 22:11).

Having despised the only sin-cleansing remedy, they will learn in outer darkness that nothing but the blood of Jesus could cleanse a sinner, and make him fit to stand in God's infinitely holy presence. Ah, how little men think that they insult God and dishonor Christ by refusing that only atonement which He has provided for sinners in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! But of those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, who are sanctified by His blood, and made the righteousness of God in Him, it will be for ever true

—

He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still (Rev. 22:11).

The fifteenth verse shows us the unclean ones outside — the Gentile dogs as well as the children of Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations, or idolatries; those who in heart depart from God to gratify their lusts, and all others who loved the lie of infidelity, which is always placed by the enemy in opposition to the truth, which truth those only love who are truly born of God.

Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 22:15).

But on the other hand, how sweet it is to see our precious Lord reminding us that His blood-washed ones have title to stand in changeless blessing before God, even in the unsullied holiness of His glorious. presence, there to feed upon living realities, and enter into the kingdom of the living God.

Blessed are they that do His commandments [or rather, Blessed are they that wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14).

We find, within the compass of a few verses, that the Lord announces His speedy coming three times, as if in this last letter it should be the last thought He would impress upon our minds. He also reminds us of His eternal Godhead —

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Rev. 22:13).

It need scarcely be said, that no one could lay claim to such titles but He who is God, that blessed One who left the world to go to the Father, who has sent down the Holy Ghost, and is gone to prepare a place for us. It is He who here says,

Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:7). Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:12). Surely, I come quickly (Rev. 22:20).

These things are testified in the Churches, to whom the Lord's last presentation of Himself is

the Root and Offspring of David, and THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR (Rev. 22:16).

As David's Creator and David's Offspring, the Godhead and manhood of Him who sent these things to the Churches are plainly set forth, and shows us that all the promises of royalty, and everything connected with the future kingdom of Israel, are secured in Him. The final sentences of this blessed book make us feel deeply that

the night is far spent {Rom. 13:12},

and we are encouraged, during the closing moments of the dark night, to look out for the Morning Star. It is the harbinger of the day. Those only who are watching see it. To such it is a glorious sight. Those who are slumbering on their beds see it not. It is a blessed prospect for us, because it is the Lord who here subscribes Himself —

I, Jesus . . . I am the bright and Morning Star {Rev. 22:16}.

We know it will be followed by

the Sun of righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

arising upon this desolate earth with healing in His wings, when He will make up His jewels of the elect people of Israel, and tread down the wicked as ashes under His feet. But there is no allusion, in this presentation of the Lord as the Morning Star, to any judgment upon the ungodly, which characterizes the testimony of prophets, because here it is simply the announcement of Him who is coming to meet us in the air, and receive us unto Himself. Our joy will be full then; for we shall see Him as He is, before Israel and the earth are delivered from their oppression. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Therefore we wait for God's Son from heaven, the bright and Morning Star, to take us out of this scene, and to be for ever with Him and like Him.

"Panting with rapture and surprise, 'Caught up,' our fond affections rise, Our coming Lord to meet; Hearing the trumpet's glorious sound; Soaring to join the rising crowd; Gazing upon the parted cloud Beneath His pierced feet. "O blessed, O thrice blessed word! To be 'for ever with the Lord' In heavenly beauty, fair! Up! up! we long to hear the cry, Up! up! our coming Lord draws nigh, Yes, 'in the twinkling of an eye, 'To meet Him in the air."

No sooner, then, does the blessed Lord present Himself as the bright and Morning Star, than there is a response, —

The Spirit and the Bride say, COME {Rev. 22:17};

for it is the Holy Ghost dwelling in the saints that teaches them, and enables them to say,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is well to see that the Holy Spirit shows us things to come, and inspires us with hope; that He teaches us to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus.

Surely nothing else could ever satisfy the bride's heart; for she is espoused to one husband, and her assurance is that she will be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ. Those who are taught of God love the Lord Jesus. They truly say —

"No object so glorious we see, And none so attractive to us."

The affections and desires of the saints are drawn out after Christ, for what He is in Himself, in all the perfectness of Divine and changeless love. It would seem as if there were an intimation here of bridal affections characterizing saints just before the Lord's return: not all saints; for the next sentence shows us that some are not thus responding to our Lord's revelation of Himself as

the bright and Morning Star:

hence the exhortation,

Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

And is it not very remarkable how love for the person of our Lord, and desire for His coming, characterize many saints now? In almost all times of the history of the Church there have been those who have rejoiced before God in the finished work of Christ, redemption by His blood, and have willingly suffered for His sake. But there is something more in the present day, low and humbling as our condition is in many respects; there is a manifest, and I think in some an increasing attachment to the Lord Himself, with the longing desire to see Him. In many parts of England and Ireland, on the Continent, and in other parts of the world, how frequently is the cry going up to heaven from longing souls, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and in various ways how cherished and cultivated are what may be properly called bridal affections towards Christ? And if so, is it not like the rousing of the slumbering virgins at the cry of,

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him {Matt. 25:6}?

which is soon followed by all those who have oil in their vessels with their lamps meeting Him, and going to the marriage. Who knows how soon this blessed hope may be realized by us, beloved! How encouraging this view of the subject is, and how calculated to stir the affections of our souls in becoming fervour to our Lord!

But further. In connection with this, as I have noticed, there appear to be some who do not say,

Come, Lord Jesus;

hence it is added,

Let him that heareth say, Come.

What hinders them from thus responding to our Lord? Is it from bad teaching, a lack of spiritual instruction on the subject? Is it worldliness of spirit? for eating and drinking with the drunken is associated in Scripture with the unholy sentiment,

My Lord delayeth His coming {Matt. 24:48; Luke 12:45}.

Is it carnal-mindedness? allowing fleshly lusts and tempers to grieve and quench the Spirit of God, and thus hinder His teaching. It may be that malice, guile, hypocrisy, and evil speakings, are not laid aside (for they are natural to us all), and spiritual desires and growth are checked, and thus hinder the cry in the soul, of Come, Lord Jesus! Is it the habit of carelessness and insubjection to Christ, not keeping His words? for the Church is supposed in Scripture to be subject unto Christ; and those true to Him, who keep His words, sayings, and commandments, are promised the enjoyment of sweet manifestations of Christ, and abiding fellowship with the Father and the Son. Whatever it be that hinders the soul from truly giving utterance to the cry of

Come, Lord Jesus,

it should be detected and judged; for the inspired declaration is,

Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

With this intimation of a company on earth inspired with bridal affections towards Christ, we have also bowels of mercies going out in deep Christ-like love and compassion towards the lost around. This is another important thought in reference to the present day; for who has not observed how largely the gospel of the grace of God has gone forth of late, and that by servants of God who look for the coming of our Lord! Here they are linked together, for a present salvation is associated in Scripture with this blessed hope; and who can conceive a heart really touched with love towards Christ, and waiting for His coming, that does not long for the salvation of souls? I know nothing so calculated to till coming. If the above view be correct, we may be now in the very closing days of the Church's history on earth.

The "thirsty" are considered here. Disturbed or dissatisfied with what their poor hearts have tasted, they crave something more. Earth's charms have been vainly tried. Nature's resources are exhausted. The emptiness of men's inventions painfully experienced. Their own hope of self-improvement has been woefully disappointing. That which they most eagerly sought has failed to satisfy. A dead fly has been found in it all. The soul longs and pants for something else. It really thirsts for what can give present rest, and meet eternal realities. Such are here addressed,

Let him that is athirst come {Rev. 22:17}.

The Lord Jesus alone can relieve such. He can give rest. His blood purges the conscience. He gives eternal life. He saves at once and for ever.

But there are many who seem not to thirst; but they are unsaved, going on the broad road, trying to get comfort in themselves, or in the world, or anywhere but in Christ. Such were some of us. Still the gospel addresses itself, to sinners, ungodly, enemies. As the the Lord said in the beginning of His ministry,

Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish {John 3:15, 16},

so now, at the very close, it is,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

It is the fullest, freest grace. Throwing His loving arms wide open, He welcomes any, every sinner that will take eternal life at His hands as a free gift. How rich is this mercy. Can anything exceed the gracious fervour of the Lord toward the lost? or can a more thorough welcome be

intimated to the soul that desires eternal life? It is not a question of terms or conditions, but God in Christ taking the place of a giver, and making the soul eternally happy that is willing to be a receiver, content to be saved in God's way — thus accepting Christ as his Savior, and giving all the glory to God! Observe, it is not a question of religion at all; there is no room for pleading ordinances, no advantage proffered to the moralist, nothing repulsive set before the most profane: it is simply a question of life eternal, and possessed, too, not by those who hold orthodox views even of the gospel, but by those who take Christ as their Savior: not by those who say they think of Christ, or pray to Christ, or work for Christ; but by those who take Christ:

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

Worship, service, and other fruits of faith, of course follow. They are the effects of life received, not the cause. A mistake here is of eternal importance. The saved sinner can sing —

"I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give the living water: thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live.' I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream, My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in Him. 'I am this dark world's light. Look unto me, thy morn shall rise, And all thy day be bright.' I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my star, my sun; And in that light of life I'll walk Till travelling days are done."

Before this blessed little book is concluded, we find a remarkable parenthesis. The awful sins of adding to and taking from God's Word are plainly insisted upon. These we know are not uncommon errors. The Lord especially refers to the book of Revelation, but the Old Testament sounds a somewhat similar warning.

Every word of God is pure. . . . Add thou not to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:5, 6).

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it (Deut. 4:2).

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:32).

The Lord has been always jealous for the maintenance of His own truth. Saul lost the kingdom because he obeyed not the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:28).

We know, too, what judgments came upon Jehoiakim king of Judah for cutting and burning the word of the Lord written on the roll of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 36:29, 30). The canon of Scripture is complete. To add to it must be deeply offensive to God. It must be the fruit of a proud and unbelieving heart. The warning is addressed to every man that even heareth the prophecy of this book; and in executing the sentence, God will be no respecter of persons.

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book (Rev. 22:18).

Nor is it a light thing either to take away from the complete revelation that God has graciously given. Believers are supposed in Scripture to be

subject unto Christ (Eph. 5:24).

Practical Christianity consists in owning the lordship of Jesus: and the Christian's warfare is carried on in the exercise of

casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

The soul, therefore, that is spiritual, under divine teaching, cannot fail to be jealous for God's Word. The old sin of making the Word of God of none effect by man's tradition is still round about us; for the unsubdued will is ever read to own any other authority than God's and follow any other guidance. Man's traditions, however, alter according to circumstances, and the commandments of men pass away with those who decree them; but

the word of the Lord endureth for ever {1 Pet. 1:25}.

Jesus said,

I have given them thy word {John 17:14}. Thy word is truth {John 17:17}.

Sanctify them through thy truth {John 17:17}.

divine standard, and taking the unholy liberty of setting aside any portion of the truth of the Revelation.

If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part [portion] out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:19).

Can anything be more solemn? or could any words be more thoroughly invested with divine authority? Need we anything more to persuade us of the deep value and weighty import of the book? or to prompt us to read it with prayerfulness of spirit and true subjection of heart before God? We know how ready the intellect is to frame theories, and go to the Scripture for some license for their existence; in other words, to go to God's Word to get something to endorse a system, instead of bowing down in self-loathing, and felt ignorance, to receive what God has to say to us in His Word by the Spirit's teaching. O for real subjection of heart to Christ!

Again and again, as we have before noticed, the Lord announces at the close of this book that He is coming quickly, and each announcement is connected with a different character of thought, which we may do well to consider.

The first is,

Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).

We were assured, at the opening of the Revelation, of the blessing connected with those who keep the things written therein; and though, doubtless, such feel now the blessing of God in all their endeavours to keep what is here set forth, still the Lord's own testimony of approval will be specially known by each one at His coming. This prophetic book shows us the working of principles, and their results. Lawlessness is here described in all its horrible ungodliness. Religiousness comes out in dark forms of infidelity and superstition. Things true and things false stand here in widest contrast. Christ and Antichrist, the remnant and the apostate people, the bride and the harlot, are all brought out. Every vision carries with it some deep, searching, moral testimony to the affections and conscience. The sayings of the prophecy of this book are powerfully commended to the heart and judgment. The Lamb in majesty and glory is here seen. He is the great object of attraction.

"No place too high for Him is found, No place too high in heaven."

It is therefore an eminently sanctifying book, most awakening to the spiritual affections and desires, most instructive as to the principles of everything at work around us; so that those who heed its teaching must get immense blessing now, and find the Lord's approval at His coming.

Secondly, we find in the 12th verse,

Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:12).

Not a cup of cold water given to a disciple out of love to Jesus shall lose its reward then. When our Lord spake of making a feast, and calling the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind, He said,

Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

Those who do not glide down the religious stream, but are separate in heart and walk unto the Lord, in subjection to His word and Spirit, must be content to be present losers, to be misunderstood, and not surprised at having their motives misjudged; but we must walk before Him who searches the heart, and by whom actions are weighed, knowing that when He comes again He will not withhold His

Well done {Matt. 25:21, 23}

from what He can approve. How different will many things appear then! How much that is now applauded will be found lighter than vanity, when tried in the balance of the sanctuary; and how truly it will be manifested then, that things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God. But Jesus says,

My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

How encouraging! We have now to

fight the good fight of faith {1 Tim. 6:12}, to

earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints {Jude 1:3},

to

keep the word of His patience {see Rev. 3:10},

to be

obedient children {1 Pet. 1:14};

in a word, to follow Christ. We are to suffer with Christ, and suffer for Christ; to bear the reproach of Christ; to be rejected with Christ; not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and in all things to serve the Lord Christ. We are to be mindful of everything around us only in relation to Christ; to have an eye to His glory, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, to continue in His love, and manifest true friendship to Him, so that His joy may remain in us, and that our joy may be full. Happy are those who can esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world, because they have respect unto the recompense of the reward; or, like the apostles, can rejoice at being counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

We now come to the third and final announcement of our Lord's return. They are the Lord's last words to the Churches, and are most cheering —

Surely I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}.

This assurance leaves no room for a question. What our Lord's thought of "quickly" may be, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is a point we might consider; but certain it is that He thus leaves his Church in the position of expectancy of Himself. Whatever events have been recorded, He presents Himself as the alone hope, and He would have us in the posture of patiently waiting for Him, and occupying till He comes.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching (Luke 12:37).

A hearty sympathy with our Lord's announcement is then brought out —

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is not merely, "Come," but,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Nothing can be plainer. It is the outflowing of affection to the Lord Himself. It is the longing heart of Jesus meeting with true response in His saints. Are we, beloved reader, in sympathy with the blessed Lord? It is possible to hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and to have knowledge of prophetic truth, without having the Lord Jesus, as the longing desire of the soul. It is not knowledge, but the hope, that purifies, and separates us unto the Lord (1 John 3:3). I ask, then, Is He the hope of our souls? Is it Christ Himself that we are looking for? This is eminently practical, and soul-purifying: for a believer not to be waiting for God's Son from heaven is sadly defective, and connected with great spiritual loss.

The time may be short or long, according to human reckoning, before our Lord's return; but during the interval there is all-sufficient grace in Him for every need and distress; and thus the Revelation concludes with,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen {Rev. 22:21}.

"Lord Jesus, come! Nor let us longer roam Afar from thee, and that bright place Where we shall see thee face to face: Lord Jesus, come! "Lord Jesus, come! Thine absence here we mourn. Nor joy we know apart from thee, Nor sorrow in thy presence see: Come, Jesus, come! "Lord Jesus, come! And claim us as thine own; Our weary feet would wander o'er This dark and sinful world no more: Come, Savior, come! "Lord Jesus, come! And take thy people home, That all thy flock, so scattered here, With thee in glory may appear: Lord Jesus, come!"

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), Lord's Counsel., The (3:18)

Revelation 3:18.

It is always sweet to trace the grace of our Lord Jesus in His ways with His people. The Laodicean Church had turned away from Him—they had practically eluded Him, in whom was all their blessing— but He tarries at the door, and knocks for admission; and, with yearning of heart, proffers a word of counsel to them. The Lord loveth judgment, and would have them consider their ways; yet He forsaketh not His mints, although it may be needful that He should disown them, in a corporate capacity, as His public witness.

His appeal is very touching—His fingers drop, as it were, sweet smelling myrrh, while knocking at the door. The Laodiceans seem to have forgotten that they have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, and that except they abide in Him they cannot bring forth fruit: therefore the Lord reminds them that all true riches, wisdom, and strength, yea, all their springs are in Him whom they so slight, and who purchased the Church of God with His own blood. What tenderness, grace, wisdom, and faithful love His counsel bespeaks! It is as if He said to them, as to Israel of old, "Return unto Me, for I am married unto you."

The life proper to a believer is a life of faith: he lives "by the faith of the Son of God." Our felt need keeps us "looking unto Jesus." To suppose that we "have need of nothing" is to cease to live by faith. Peter did not cry out, "Lord, save me!" until he was "beginning to sink"—his need compelled him to seek Jesus (Matt. 14:30). Self-complacency, indolence, barrenness, and ignorance abound when the believer does not "walk in the light, as He is in the light," in humble dependence upon the grace of God. When circumstances, service, or anything else is sought after to satisfy the heart, the grace of God is lost sight of, and a low and unhealthy condition of soul is the sure result. Laodicean circumstances were prosperous—"I am rich, and increased with goods;" but their spiritual state was "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," and they knew it not. Words of solemn import to us, beloved!

But there is restoring grace in Jesus as well as life giving grace—yea, all spiritual blessings. He counsels them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire," that they may be rich. Corruptible gold can only be rightly estimated by comparing it with that which rust doth not corrupt. Incorruptible blessings are to be had elusively of Him "who only hath immortality." The common temptation presented to a declining saint is to recover himself by redoubling his diligence in outward service, but the counsel of the Lord is to come at once to the only source of blessing—"Buy of Me," said He, though you are wretched, and miserable, and poor; come, "buy of Me," without money, and without price. Nothing is more important, when we discover that we have failed, than at once taking refuge at the throne of grace, remembering our compassionate and pitiful High Priest—our all-prevailing Advocate. No increase of effort to serve can procure the restoring grace needed; but "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all righteousness;" or, though particular sins may not be laid on the conscience, the sense of a withered and barren state of soul should lead us to Him for refreshment, and new supplies of comfort and strength. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." May we never forget the loving counsel of Jesus; and may it be ours, beloved, to respond to these gracious words, "Buy of ME gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." He loves us to have true riches, but He well knows that every other refuge but Himself is deceitful, and that he who drinketh other than "living water" will only "thirst again."

I presume that earnest prayer, self-judgment, confession, searching the Holy Scriptures, in dependence on the teaching of the Spirit, assembling together in the name of Jesus, seeking the Lord, waiting on Him, feeding upon His flesh and blood, &c. will characterize the conduct of those who buy of HIM "gold tried in the fire." The meditations of the heart will be on "that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,"— the glory and beauty of the "Lamb without spot,"—the undefiled purity of the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow,—the immaculate perfectness of the "Holy Child" whom angels worshipped,—the exhaustless riches of Him who is full of Grace and Truth,—the unfailing sympathy of the "Brother born for adversity,"—the amazing meekness and lowliness of the "Man of sorrows,"—the unutterable sufferings of the sinner's Friend,—the scorn, mocking, and crucifixion of "the Lord of glory," and the forsaking of JEHOVAH, who made His soul an offering for sin, and brought Him into the dust of death,—the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep,—His

death,—burial,—His triumphant resurrection by the glory of the Father,—His exaltation far above all heavens,—His expected return, and other scriptural thoughts and views of the person, grace, work, offices, &c. of the Lord Jesus Christ, will characterize the heart exercises of those who buy of Him “gold tried in the fire.” How poor are they whose riches are all corruptible and pass away! What true riches, what an inexhaustible, unchanging, and eternal treasure we have in Christ Jesus! How strange that we should ever seek gladness or gratification in aught but Him! Our present joy, certainly, is to know Him, our eternal blessing to be with Him, and like Him, forever.

But the Lord Jesus may be the Object of our affection, truly so, and yet our walk come short of that which characterizes discipleship; and this will be, except we are enabled, by faith, to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” —to realize our standing in Him, who is at the right hand of God—to appropriate God’s righteousness as ours. Hence the Lord also counsels the church at Laodicea to buy of Him “white raiment,” that the shame of their nakedness might not appear. That every believer has the righteousness of God the—“white raiment”—imputed to Him, is very clear; but it is quite another thing to live in the power of it—practically to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this important truth that seems to me to be taught here, and so needful to be apprehended, in order to walk as faithful witnesses of Jesus, and to be preserved from the shame of manifested nakedness. If this blessed grace in which we stand be lost sight of, carnal confidence and self-esteem will be more or less nurtured, and an unspiritual walk result. The only preservative against this is the “white raiment” (and we cannot be said to be happy in our souls, or safe as to our steps without it): “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14). In the Lord we have righteousness and strength. When abiding in Jesus, we “bear fruit;” severed from Him, we “can do nothing”—the shame of our nakedness appears. It is marvelous how liable we are to slide away from the apprehension of our standing in Christ, and to lean upon an arm of flesh. Those only will maintain a calm, even, godly step, who appreciate their standing and portion in Christ risen. There may, however, be much zeal and stir in service, but the resources being carnal, the fruits will be of an unspiritual quality, and not for the glory of God: the shame of our nakedness will assuredly appear, if the “white raiment” be not appropriated. It is no marvel then that Luke warmth, poverty, and unhappiness of spirit should abound, when the soul refuses to give heed to that blessed relation of the grace of God which imputes “righteousness without works.” It cannot be otherwise, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. The heart, however, that with fervor receives, and abides in this rich grace wherein we stand, can rejoice in hope of the glory of God—can afford to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and knows it to be no vain thing to suffer for His sake. Oh, to be kept abiding and walking in Him!

Perhaps there is nothing we so tenaciously hold as our own wisdom. Our sinful experience, and the condemnation of conscience, compel us to take refuge in the Saviour, and our daily sense of failure may be enough to constrain us to confess, “behold I am vile!” but to continually allow that we have no ability to perceive anything aright, but by the power of God, involves no little self-renunciation. One may say, that it is a more difficult thing to cease from our own wisdom, than to cease from our own righteousness. Job acknowledged he was vile, before he was brought to the confession that he had darkened counsel by words without knowledge, and uttered things that he understood not. Be this, however, as it may, it is clear that blindness had taken possession of the Church at Laodicea, because they lacked the “eye salve” which Jesus only can supply. If the heart be not in communion with God, there is no ability to see anything clearly either in ourselves or others. The Laodiceans were blind, and knew it not; they thought they had “need of nothing.” Self-confidence and spiritual darkness are generally associated together. We have need to extract the beam from our own eye, to be able to “see clearly” to take the mote out of our brother’s eye. The Lord counselled the Laodicean saints to buy of Him “eye-salve” that they might see. In proportion as we cease from our own wisdom, we are willing to be taught of God; we presume not to understand the deep things of God but by His Spirit; and when pondering His word, the earnest cry of our souls is, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!”

Well may we say,

There is no position, or circumstance, a child of God may be in, but His grace, wisdom, and power can meet—no difficulty from which He is unable to deliver, no wound that He is not all-sufficient to bind up and heal. Blessed it is for us when the Lord is the object of our affection, the spring of our joy, our treasure, our righteousness, our wisdom and our strength. May the Churches, now, have ears to hear what the Spirit saith!

Notes on the Revelation With Practical Reflections, Revelation 8:6-9:21 and 11:15-19: The Seven Trumpets (9)

At whatever period the seven trumpets begin to sound, the series is continued until the Lord takes His great power, and reigns. The first four trumpet-actions do not seem to bear directly on men, though the third trumpet-sound causes the waters to become bitter, and many men drink of the waters, and die. The last three trumpets are connected with terrible power and judgment directly upon men living on the earth, and are called the three woes. It is God punishing the inhabitants of the earth. The trumpets are severer in their character than the seals.

We noticed, in considering the seventh chapter, that the angels were not to sound their trumpets until the elect remnant of Israel was set apart — till the servants of our God are sealed in their foreheads. That being done, the first angel sounds a trumpet.

The FIRST ANGEL sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (Rev. 8:7).

We must never forget, in reading the Revelation, that after the Church has been caught up, the energy of Satan in the earth will be increasingly put forth, so as at last to deluge the world with infidelity; and God will send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. Like as in the days of Pharaoh, men will say,

Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him? {see Ex. 5:2}

and the only Lord God, and only wise God, will be denied, and man exalted. Therefore, under such circumstances, we may expect that God would remarkably manifest Himself as the living God, by various actions in different parts of the universe, as He has hitherto done in the days of special darkness and unbelief. The hail, fire, turning water into blood, and other plagues of Egypt, bear testimony to this; and closing the

heavens, that there might be no rain for three years and a half, and then again sending rain in Ahab's day, show us the same thing. Nor should we forget the darkness at the crucifixion of our Lord, and the signs that followed, in the rending of the rocks, the earthquake, the rending of the veil, the opening of the graves, and rising of the bodies of the saints, and appearing to many, as God's own witnesses to men that He is the living God.

The third part of trees and green grass may be emblematic of prosperity. Thus, men are touched in their prosperous circumstances.

The SECOND ANGEL sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed (Rev. 8:8, 9).

In the first trumpet, we see hail, fire, and blood, cast upon the earth, and some trees and all green grass burnt up. In the second trumpet, a great mountain, as it were (that is, something similar to a great burning mountain), is cast into the sea, when the third part of the sea becomes blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea die, and a third of the ships are destroyed. In the first trumpet, the earth, trees, grass are affected; and in the second, the sea, its creatures, and its ships: both are fiery, burning judgments.

The great burning mountain may be a symbol of power removed from its accustomed place, and thrown into that which brings terrible judgment upon the people.

The THIRD ANGEL sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter (Rev. 8:10, 11).

This judgment is upon rivers, and fountains of water, turning them bitter, and producing death on many men who drink thereof. One would think that such mighty exhibitions of Divine power would soften men's hearts. But it is not so. Man's mind will, perhaps, then try to account for such changes, even as it does now for many of God's actings. Love, God's own love to man as a sinner, in the Cross of Christ, alone breaks and captivates the human heart. Mercy, sweet mercy, is the sound that the Holy Spirit uses to enter and take full possession of man's affections and desires. Some one has said truly, that

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The star falling from heaven may be the symbol of a mighty ruler having fallen from his place of authority; burning as a lamp may show how brightly he had shone. "Waters" may be emblematic of people, and "fountains" and "rivers" their sources of refreshment.

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 (Rev. 8:12).

Thus we see the soundings of the first four angels connected with signs and changes in almost every department of the universe. There are not only

signs in the earth beneath,

but also

wonders in heaven above {Acts 2:19}:

The earth, trees, grass, sea, fish, rivers, fountains, men, sun, moon, stars, day and night, each in turn exhibit marks of God's interference. All these judgments have doubtless symbolic signification. Under the action of the fourth trumpet, the highest authorities are smitten — sun, moon, and stars. But all these things, together with the casting of hail and fire on the earth mingled with blood, are far less severe than the judgments that follow the sounding of the other three angels. These are specially marked by being prefaced with an announcement of an angel, saying,

WOE, WOE, WOE to the inhabitants of the earth.

And I beheld, and heard (not an angel but) an eagle 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! (Rev. 8:13).

This distinctly marks the last three trumpets as directly upon the inhabitants of the earth. God now deals directly with men, and that at first by the power of Satan, and then by the personal coming of Christ Himself.

When the FIFTH ANGEL sounds, a mighty potentate is seen, likened to a star, once having had a place among the heavenly luminaries, but fallen from it:

a star (not 'fall' but) fallen from heaven {Rev. 9:1},

to whom the key of the bottomless pit is given; i.e. the abyss where Satan will be imprisoned, not the lake of fire. He opened the abyss; a dense smoke and darkness arose from the pit, and out of the smoke came locusts upon earth, with the power of scorpions. This mission is one of judicial bearing on men, and, perhaps, especially, on the Jews; for they are commanded not to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. They are not to kill, but to torment them five months. Infliction, and misery without death, characterize this judgment. That these locusts are figurative of Satanic power seems reasonable, from their issuing out of the bottomless pit, their being likened to horses prepared to battle, wearing crowns on their heads, having faces of men, hair of women, and teeth of lions, breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings like the sound of chariots of many horses running to

battle. They have tails also like scorpions, and have a king over them — the angel of the bottomless pit. All these things mark them as mighty instruments for inflicting torture on men, and sufficiently prove that they are not mere locusts, but devils let loose to grievously torment man. We are told,

In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them {Rev. 9:6}.

What language can more touchingly convey the exquisite suffering of men in those days. It may be much nearer, too, than any of us think! Happy they who are now safely sheltered by the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

This may be truly called a woe; but terrible woes are yet to come. Accordingly, we are told,

One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more after these things {Rev. 9:12}.

The SIXTH ANGEL sounded, and I heard a voice from the

four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates {Rev. 9:13, 14}.

This is done, and they are prepared for a limited time, not to torment, but to slay the third part of men. Two hundred millions of wicked agents are employed in slaying men —

two hundred thousand thousand {Rev. 9:16}.

It seems Satanic agency, because of the fire, smoke, and brimstone which issued from their mouths; and the region may be in the east.

By these three, that is, by the

fire, smoke, and brimstone,

was the third part of men killed {see Rev. 9:18}.

But, as we have seen before, all these judgments do not lead men to repentance. One might have thought that these solemn interventions of God might have caused those who were spared to turn to God. But we are told,

And the rest of the men which were not killed by those plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts (Rev. 9:20, 21).

How sunken and incurable is the heart of man! How every part of his history — past, present, and future, illustrates the Divine verdict, that the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be {Rom. 8:7}.

Seeing that such terrible things are coming upon the earth, and we know not how soon, how prayerful and earnest should we be in seeking to win souls for Christ. May our gracious God most mercifully work, by the power of His Holy Spirit, through the gospel of His grace, to the salvation of multitudes of sinners now so zealously posting their way toward

the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:10}.

sounds, and our souls are at once drawn from earth and its miseries to heaven and its joys. Heaven rejoices that the earth is

rescued from the hands of man and Satan, and that the Lord Jesus, the rightful heir, takes possession of it (Rev. 11:15-19).

The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever {Rev. 11:15}.

As usual, the elders who delight in the exaltation of the Lord, are in intelligent communion with God about the things of Christ; therefore we find that

the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast; because thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:16, 17}.

Observe that the living creatures are not noticed here in company with the elders.

The consequences and attendants upon Christ's taking the judgment and government of the earth into His own hands follow the sounding of this trumpet.

Thy wrath is come {Rev. 11:18};

for He will come, in flaming fire taking vengeance, and must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

The nations were angry {Rev. 11:18},

or, have been full of wrath; but now it is the time of the wrath of the Lamb.

Every eye shall see Him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

We also see that God's servants the prophets, and the saints, are rewarded, and those that fear Him, both small and great; those that destroyed or corrupted the earth are destroyed; and the dead are judged. It is a brief sketch of the various acts of judgment during the reign of Christ, from the beginning of His taking the kingdom to the end.

The chapter closes with the account of the temple of God being opened in heaven, the ark of the testament seen, with the lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. Happy for our hearts to find, that while judgment is poured out upon earth, the ark of the covenant is seen in heaven, witnessing to God's faithfulness, and the everlasting stability of His people's hope. The ark tells us of the mercy seat and the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is rest. The precious blood, presented for us before God, always reminds us of entrance into the holiest and perfect peace, whatever may be the trouble and distress around. While looking thus by faith at our Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, presenting His own perfect sacrifice there on our behalf, we can not only cry, Come, Lord Jesus! but we realize that

"Faith almost changes into sight, While, from afar, she spies
Her fair inheritance in light Above created skies."
Some rays of heaven break sweetly in
At all the opening flaws; Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws."

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