

Revelation - Commentaries by William Kelly

The Prospect, Examination of Revelation 11:8

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

IN a version of the Apocalypse, printed in "The Prospect," (vol. page 158,) it is proposed to translate this verse as follows: "And their dead body shall lie in the great street of the city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." A foot note adds, "It is evident that Jerusalem (literal or symbolical) is the city referred to in the preceding verses, and determined to be the city in question by the words which follow."

Now, quite agreed that the note so far is correct, I cannot but acknowledge increasing hesitation, on various grounds, as to the supposed amendment. The authorized version has "the street of the great city," and conveys the more natural sense of the Greek. Indeed, the only version known to me which adopts the proposed rendering, is that of Lausanne, (second edition, 1840) in which we read, "leurs cadavres seront sur la gran& place de la ville, qui est apelée," &c.

1.—As to the text, without delaying to comment on the question of αὐτῶν instead of ἡμῶν—a reading now adopted by every judicious critic and resting upon the authority of the three uncial and at least thirty other MSS., not to speak of the Vulgate, Coptic, /Ethiopic, Syriac, Armenian, and other versions, and directing our attention more particularly to the first clause of the verse, I think it may be safely said that the weight of the more ancient MSS. inclines to the following: καὶ τὸ πῶμα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, ἣτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σόδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος, ὅπου καὶ ὁ Κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη. Certain it is that A. C., and twenty-five manuscripts in cursive characters, support the insertion of the article before πόλεως. Accordingly, such is the reading of the Complutensian editors, of Bongo: Matthiae, Lachmann, Tischendorf and Tregelles. From my own knowledge, I can state that the opinion of the present Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, of the Biblical Greek Professor at Dublin, and of Professor Dunbar, of Edinburgh, coincides with their judgment. On the other hand, in the Textus Receptus that article is omitted, and so the editions of Griesbach, Knappe, and Scholz, with others of lesser note.

2.—The rendering would depend, for the most part, I think, upon the reading which is preferred. Thus, if we take the vulgar text, I do not see how one can translate ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, "on the street of the great city." It offends against the well-known and admitted rule that if a noun has another with it in an oblique case, either both have the article or neither. Undoubtedly, exceptions there are to this rule, but there is a principle which governs these exceptions. Does the present instance resemble them? I think not. The only exception which Matthiae cites is the following from Xen. Cyrop. 6, 3, 8, συνεκάλεσε καὶ ἰππέων καὶ πεζῶν καὶ ἄρμάτων τοῦς ἡγεμόνας. The reason is plait. The commanders are the designated object of the mind; not so the cavalry, infantry, and chariots, which characterize them. Τῶν, might have been inserted before the first only of the genitives, or before each of them; but either arrangement would have modified the meaning, by introducing additional ideas to those which the author had in view. In both cases it would have made specific objects of the bodies commanded: in the latter, separate objects; in the former, things in themselves, independent, no doubt, but all forming one object in mental apprehension. The reader of Middleton's treatise will remember that the Bishop pronounces Origen's phrase ὀκταρῶς σῶκων to be incorrect Greek; because he believed the insertion of the article before the governed noun to be required by its presence before the governing noun, as is no doubt usually the case. But, without appealing to well-known passages in Plato, Herodotus, or others, τὰ αἵματα ὑρῶν καὶ τράγων (Heb. 9:13) is a plain instance from the New Testament itself; which is irreconcilable with the rule. Is then the insertion or omission of the article optional in such cases? By no means. Both might be true, but they do not assert the same thing. The one merely characterizes; the other presents a positive object before the mind.

If it be said we have the article connected with μεγάλης, and therefore it was not necessary before πόλεως, the answer is, that, if the design of the inspired writer had been to convey the idea of "the great city," the regular mode of expression would have been τῆς πόλτῆς μεγ (as in Rev. 16:10; 17:11; 18:10, 16, 18, 10,) or τῆς μεγ. πόλ (as in Rev. 18:21.) Some might refer to Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, but this is the common anarthrous case of a proper yenta followed, by a description which has the article. If κινδυνὸς τοῦς μεγίστους be cited as more in point, I can only ask the reader to examine the passage where it occurs in the Nicomachean Ethics, and he will see that the philosopher had a rhetorical object its view when he wrote thus. Some endure dangers—any dangers, yea, the greatest. A species of climax seem to be intended, and is secured by the phrase: this would have been defeated by writing τοῦς μεγ. κινδ. Somewhat similar is 1 Tim. 5:3, χήρας τίματα ὕντως "honour widows," and then the apostle qualifies the thought by adding "that are widows indeed." But these cases are obviously distinct from "the great city," supposing that to be the idea which was meant in Rev. 11:8. What reason can be assigned for departing from the usual formulae, which regulate the phrase everywhere else in the book? If it be said that all the old versions present that idea, this would serve to confirm the hypothesis that they all read τῆς πόλεως. Primasius, it may be added, renders the passage "in medio civitatis illius magnac," which still implies the same reading.

Perhaps it was the omission of the article which led Boothroyd to propose "the broad city, the great out" a strange phrase, yet, nevertheless, the nearest approach to the force of the ordinary text, inasmuch as πλατείας is most simply made an adjective, if you omit τῆς before πόλεως. So Wetstein understands it, though he prefers the sense of deserta; which at least proves, as a learned person observes, that, in his judgment, the anarthrous construction forces us to consider πλ. adjectivally.

The author of the Horae Apocalypticae, vol. 2., page 365, has, in note 3, "πλατεία remarked on afterwards." This is clearly a mistake; it ought to be πλατείας. So it is given in note 2, referred to in page 385: "It may be well to observe, that the correct reading of the Greek text seems to be ἐπι τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, with the τῆς inserted before πόλεως. So Tregelles, in his late elaborate and critical edition of the Apocalyptic text; it being so given alike in the Codex Alexandrines and Codex Ephraemi, as well as many others." But the error of πλατεία for

πλατεία occurs again in a supplement to vol. iv., page 512, where in a note it is said, Ἐν τῇ πλατείᾳ τῆς πολέως τῆς μεγάλης. This, as the best reading is given by Tregelles. The omission of the first τῆς in other editions, makes no difference in the point of the designation." It is probable that in the first and third of these passages, the author quoted from memory; one cannot easily account for the mistake otherwise. If the text had really been ἐν τῇ πλατείᾳ instead of ἐπὶ τῆς πλ. two of the proposed renderings could have had no place. The authorized and usual versions must have been right, it might be truly said, beyond all question. Tregelles exhibits the latter reading, not the former.—Next, we have seen that the omission of the article so far from making no difference, renders the common rendering, to say the least, very suspicious, because it seems to violate grammar, and compels us to regard as more exact the version of those who take πλατείας as an adjective.

3.—As regards the interpretation of the verse, it is scarcely possible for any man to deny that in the preceding part we are on Jewish ground. Some may contend that this is a mystic scene, and that its application is Christendom; others, that it is the literal temple of God, altar, and worshippers therein, &c.; and that Gentiles, as such, shall tread down the city, the holy city of Jerusalem, for a certain defined and brief term; that two sackcloth-robed witnesses shall prophesy there, who have power to shut; heaven and plague the earth, and are miraculously protected till the completion of their 1260 days' testimony. Now, if the scene of this testimony be Jerusalem, (necessarily the center of worship and witness to the God or Lord of the earths, see 2 Chron. 7:12-21,) what reason can there be to transport the dead bodies of the witnesses from east to west? from Jerusalem to Rome? On earth, the Only place which is ever styled "the holy city," is Jerusalem. Such it will be really under the reign of Christ, when there shall no more come into it the uncircumcised and the unclean. (Is. 52:1.) Nay, even in the captivity at Babylon, notwithstanding the evil and judgment of the city called by God's name, Daniel, in the spirit of faith, still speaks of Jerusalem as His holy city. (Dan. 9:24.) And this is the more apposite, as there is a manifest link between the reserved bisected seventieth week of Daniel and the Apocalypse, the former half-week, as I believe, answering to Rev. 11:1-13, the very scene which we are considering, if the application be made to the final crisis. After the return of the remnant, it is just the same. The Spirit of God, in Neh. 11:1, 18, still describes Jerusalem as "the holy city." But then do we not hear of "the great city" in verse 8? Is this inapplicable to Jerusalem on the Futurist theory? In nowise. Nay, we may just remark that (in the same book, where, we have seen, it is alluded to as the holy city,) Neh. 7:4 speaks of it as a city broad and great: καὶ ἡ πόλις πλατεῖα καὶ μεγάλη. In Ps. 48:1, 2, we read: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." This is evidently referred to in Matt. 5:35, where it is distinctly treated as "the city of the great King," as in the former chapter (4:5) it appears as "the holy city." (See also Matt. 27:53.) It is almost needless to observe that "great" ought to disappear from the description of the holy city Jerusalem in Rev. 21:10, τῆς μεγάλης being properly omitted by all critics.

But it has been urged, from the days of Jerome to Mr. Elliott, that the real, literal Jerusalem was never called Egypt. The answer is that, if you mean by "called," expressly so designated in Scripture, certainly Babylon was never so called. So that the utmost that could be pretended is, that both stand on equal ground. Would it be true to say that they do so stand? I think not. In Isaiah 1:10, Jerusalem is denounced as Sodom. "hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom." Is Babylon ever thus called in the Word of God? Nowhere. Jerusalem is, and Babylon is not, called Sodom in the Bible. Again, if the reader consult Ezek. 16, he will see, in that touching sketch of God's past and future dealings with Jerusalem, that not only is Sodom here also treated as near of kin, "thy sister Sodom," but the charge is, "Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours." Is Babylon ever so charged in the Old Testament? Is she ever accused of fornication with Egypt? Nowhere. How does Mr. E. prove that Babylon, or Rome, is thus called? Why that Grosteste spoke of "Egyptian bondage!" Wicliff of the sages of Pharaoh! and Luther of the darkness of Egypt! as the appellation Sodom was applied to the same state and city by the Romanist Peter Damian, Pope Leo IX., Baronius, as well as by others!—As to two arguments of Berengaud, a commentator of the ninth century,) which Mr. E. gives in a note to page 388, they are hardly worth noticing: 2they seem not even directed against the idea of a future Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been destroyed. Does this show that it cannot be rebuilt upon its old site? It is not to be called Sodom and Egypt, because Christians dwell there. This is doubly false, in the type and in the antitype. The moral character of Sodom and Egypt was unchanged, although just Lot dwelt in the one, and God's people groaned in the other, till the eve of the judgment which overtook their adversaries. Even so, if faith once regarded Jerusalem as the holy city, when in point of sorrowful fact it was as Sodom, I cannot see why it may not be so again. Is the guilt of Sodom, is the dark oppression of Egypt, incompatible with religious profession? Alas! we know it is not; and therefore these terms may spiritually 3 and with perfect suitability attach to the literal Jerusalem in its future condition.

At the same time, I am by no means prepared to deny that the Spirit of God had in view a twofold application, as in the prophecy generally, so here in particular.—In general, it would be "the world" at large. It is the world emphatically on which, in the gospel of John, the gravamen of the guilt of the Cross is ever made to rest, not the Jews, not the Gentiles only, but "the world;" and this would well fall in with the suggestion of Jerome. —In particular, it would be Jerusalem. In that locality, where Christ was rejected and crucified, Anti-Christ will be received, and will sit in the temple of God.

There is no force in the argument that because the beast of verse 7 is the Roman beast, therefore the city of verse 8 must be Rome. For it is clear from the last verse of Dan. 9. and elsewhere, that a Roman prince, yet to come, is to covenant with the mass of the Jewish people, and subsequently to set himself up in that city either in his own person, or by a sort of blasphemous high priest, viz. the second beast, his viceroy. Thus, diabolically imitating the Lord Christ, (who is Son of man, and so head of the Gentiles, as well as the Jewish Messiah,) the last horn of the beast may assume Jewish sovereignty as well as the empire of the west, and hence figure religiously at Jerusalem as well as civilly at Rome, though all his power be an open revolt against God. Accordingly, there seems little difficulty in understanding that "the holy city," (verse 2,4) "the great city," if it be rightly so translated in verse 8, and "the city," (verse 13,) are various aspects of the same Jerusalem, view it as you will, literally or mystically. Still less is there difficulty in seeing that the Roman beast, which has already enacted so conspicuous a part at and after the first advent, may reappear upon the same stage before the Lord returns again in glory. This at least gives unity to the picture which is vainly sought in the scheme which transports Jerusalem and Babylon into the same scene.

While it appears then, that it would be going too far to pronounce the proposed construction absolutely illegitimate, an exactly parallel ease has not yet been produced. The expression μεγάλη πόλις is familiar, whereas μεγάλη πλατεῖα is not. Therefore, if the latter had been intended, might we not have expected means taken in order to preserve the reader from gliding into the former, and so misconstruing the thought? This might have been done by a collocation which would exclude all ambiguity; viz. by writing ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας τῆς μεγάλης. Τόλ. ἦτις.... But such is not the fact. Are we, therefore, shut up in the conclusion that "the great city" of Rev. 11. is Babylon? Confessedly, the great city of Rev. 14.-18. is Rome, or Babylon. But is it the only great city in the estimate of the Spirit of God? Or may we not consider, on the contrary, that the

latter part of Rev. 11:8 distinctly and positively guards us against the use which some have made of the expression? Assuredly, the analogy of the Old Testament does not restrict it to one city as its exclusive property. Thus we find Nineveh repeatedly styled "the great city" in the prophecy of Jonah. Is it, therefore, the designation of that city solely? By no means. We afterwards read of Βαβυλῶνη μεγάλη in the prophecy of Daniel, (4:30,) which seems evidently a foreshadowing of the Apocalyptic Babylon. If the Spirit of God had simply said, "upon the street of the great city," his intention might have been mistaken; but, immediately after, He adds certain exegetical words, which are nowhere applied in Scripture to Babylon, but are all of them substantially, and most of them in express terms, said of Jerusalem only. It was Jerusalem that committed fornication with Egypt, sinking back into the world out of which Israel was called; and not Babylon, but Jerusalem was branded as Sodom: therein also the Lord was crucified. These particulars seem designedly supplied to hinder us from imagining that the great city here named is the same great city which is elsewhere so fully described. And when we come to consider the whole context, it seems plain that "the holy city," which is surely Jerusalem and not Babylon, is the central locality of the vision. Might we not call Paris "the great city," dilating on its luxuries, objects of art, sins and siege, and yet have said a little before, without impropriety and in the same essay, "the great city in which the author of Paradise Lost was born?" The two cities, London and Paris, ought not to be confounded, because the same designation was applied with perfect truth to each, and the less, as in one case it was so explained and restricted as in strictness to exclude not only the other, but every other locality on earth. To this may be added an observation, for which I am indebted to a learned person, that Jerusalem is in actual possession of the title "the great city" outside the range of Scripture, if that be thought of any weight. See the Sibylline Oracles, (book 5, verses 153, 225, 412,) where the Jewish forger denounces vengeance for the destruction of the capital and people of Judea.

On the whole, then, I think that the common reading is wrong; that the authorized version is right; and that the clauses which follow "the great city" in Rev. 11:8 were meant, in part at least, to prevent the reader from confounding this great city with another whose evil and judgment occupy so large a portion of the prophecy in subsequent chapters. The great city here alluded to is that one where the Lord was crucified, i.e. Jerusalem. Whether it is to be taken literally or figuratively, whether applicable to the dispensation, or to the crisis, or to both, are different questions; but I have no doubt that Jerusalem is intended here.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 13:1-10, Lectures on

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

We have seen that chapter 12 goes back as well as forward and connects the purpose of God which is to be brought out in the latter day with the Messiah and even with His birth. Thus, while the Lord Jesus Christ is, to my mind, clearly referred to as the manchild, yet it is not His birth merely or historically, but His birth as it is linked with this future plan of God, which the book reveals here. The moment Christ is thus referred to, (that is, Christ evidently viewed as the Head, not of the Church, but of Israel, ruling "all nations with a rod of iron," and taking the government of the world into His own hands,) Satan appears in personal opposition. It is no other than might be looked for—for God Himself had said in the garden of Eden, that He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her Seed. This was revealed at the beginning, and here we have it fulfilled at the very close. Without telling us the least about His humiliation, the man-child was caught up to God and to His throne. This it is clear that it is not a bare statement of the Lord's life, but such facts are referred to—the two great cardinal ones of His birth and of His rapture to the presence and throne of God—in order to furnish connecting links with what God has to do by-and-by with Israel. All the intermediate workings of God in the Church are left entirely out, except as we may suppose the Church to be involved in the destiny of the man-child, who is now hid with God, but is yet to reign. Just as what is said about Christ in the Old Testament is applied to the Church or the Christian in the New Testament; but still, most true and blessed as that is, it is an indirect use. Here, then, we have the Messiah in relation to the future purpose of God as regards Israel.

Then follows the vision of a war in heaven. Not the Lord Jesus Christ, but angelic power is seen used of God to put down the rebel angels, Satan and his host. And, from that moment Satan loses his power above (that is to say, the most important part of it, the most serious in itself, the most dishonoring to God, the most dangerous to the people of God) —his power in heavenly places, which is referred to in Eph. 6. and other passages. Accordingly, when Satan loses that place, there is joy in heaven, and a voice proclaims that "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ." But yet, as far as the earth was concerned, the kingdom was not actually come: only Satan had lost his place in heaven. So we find, a little answering to this, that our Lord alludes to Satan's fall from heaven in the gospel; and I notice it because some have there supposed that Satan had been expelled from the heavens long ago. It is in Luke 10, when the disciples return to the Lord, full of joy because the devils even were subject to them. The Lord answers that He "beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven." Now a person might set the words in the evangelist against the fall of Satan that is described in the Apocalypse as still future. But, evidently, this would be a misuse of Scripture. We may always rest assured that the Bible agrees with itself. It is ignorance and unbelief to set one part of God's word against another. To an unbiased mind, I think, it is certain that the fall of Satan in the prophecy is described as a prospective event, which is to take place three years and a half (however that may be taken) before the destruction of the beast and the binding of Satan himself. Consequently it is a fall that, in the Apostle John's time at least, was yet future. The immediate effect was to be a dreadful persecution against the woman and her seed. Again, I have endeavored to set forth a variety of considerations from which it is clear to me that before this event the church must have been taken to heaven. Such, the reader will remember, has been the uniform deduction I have drawn all through our former chapters 4-6 so that the fall of Satan, intimated here, must be an event subsequent to the removal of the glorified saints to heaven. What then does the Lord Jesus Christ mean when He says, "I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven?" When He sees and hears the effects of the disciples' service in His name, then the vision of Satan's catastrophe passes before His eyes, and the full consequences of His power are hailed in the then earnest of it. He looks on to the final crisis and the downfall of the Evil One, when the disciples announced so notable a sample of "the powers of the world to come." It was the first great blow struck by men at Satan's power; and therefore He anticipates the end from the beginning, and, so to speak, in a sort of musing, contemplative vision, He beheld the adversary fallen from the highest scene of his usurpation.

Nor is this an uncommon thing in Scripture. In another gospel, when the Greeks come up to the feast, desiring to see Jesus, what does He say? "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." He was going to the cross and to death; yet He declares that the hour was come that He should be glorified. How was this? If you take it in a mere literal way, it seems to me that the force of the passage is lost. Jesus

sees in the Greeks that were before Him a sample of the ingathering of the Gentiles; and the Lord perfectly well knew that the only thing that would draw the Gentiles must be His own cross and His glory in heaven. So that He looks through all the intervening scene that was before Him, for He had to accomplish redemption and to ascend on high. But from this little sample, He connects all with His glorification, and speaks of it as of a present fact.

Again, when Judas goes out and the Lord Jesus Christ repeats similar words, it is, I presume, on the same principle. (John 13:31.)

Is not Rev. 5:13 analogous? A remarkable movement was seen in the vision affecting the universe, when the sealed book was taken in hand by the Lamb. It is not merely that we had the living creatures prostrate, and the elders taking up the new song, and the myriads of angels with their loud voice of praise; but there is a chorus in which the whole creation joined. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." It was like striking a key-note that would never cease to vibrate, till the remotest bounds of creation would be filled with the glory of God and the Lamb. But the time of full blessing was here anticipated; it was, in fact, the Lamb's receiving the book of the inheritance which called forth these overflowings of worship and joy. After this followed the opening of the seals, which was but the prelude of the latter-day judgments; and these would go on increasing in severity till Christ Himself comes executing wrath. (Rev. 19) Not till then would the glory appear, and these anticipations be realized. (Chaps. 21-22.) From the first event, however, that was a link in the chain, the end is welcomed. This is the mind of Christ.

And so it is in Luke 10, the Lord does not there refer to Satan's fall as a fact actually accomplished then; but He looks on, through what was true at that time, to his future and more complete humiliation, which we see here. And even this fall of Satan is by no means the last exertion of the power of God against the enemy. For until then Satan had scarcely been touched, save to faith. It is true that in the cross of Christ he had been judged in principle (John 12:31); but, as a literal fact, he was not yet shaken from his throne of the world. Doubtless, in the cross, the great work of God in virtue of which he is to be cast out from heaven was accomplished, so that it only remains a question of time and of the will of God. And first of all, he loses the heavenly part of the power which he has usurped. Then he comes down to the earth in a rage, knowing that he has but a short time. This brings us to chap. 13; for there we get the detail of the doings of Satan here below, i.e., upon the sea and the earth (the sea, as we have before seen, symbolizing what was not under regular government, and the earth that part of the world which enjoys a state of order). The two together make up the world as a whole, or a given sphere of it, under whatever condition.

The prophet,¹ it is said, was set or stood upon the sand of the sea. In a later chapter (chap. 17.) he is carried in the Spirit into the wilderness; and afterward (chap. 21) to a great and high mountain. Here, as everywhere, all is in keeping with the scene. "I stood upon the sand of the sea." The reason is manifest. John is about to see a great beast emerging out of the sea, and accordingly he takes in the vision a suited place. "And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea." You must remember that all these visions were like a great panorama that passed before the eye of the prophet. What the meaning of the symbols used is, we have to find out by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The sea sets forth the unformed mass of the people under a troubled state of the world-people in great agitation, like the restless waves of the deep. It is that which represents a revolutionary condition among men. And it is out of that mass of anarchy and confusion that an imperial power rises. This power is called "the Beast." The same thing appears in Dan. 7; but with this difference. The Jewish prophet sees successively four beasts emerge from the sea; not one merely, as we have in the beginning of Rev. 13 There was the first beast like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, and a fourth beast of a peculiar kind. And then, before the explanation is given, one in the form of a son of man comes with the clouds of heaven, in contrast with the powers that came up from a tumultuous sea. It was a, kingdom heavenly in its source, and a king who was to use the power of God which is to be established over the earth in the person of the Lord as Son of man, instead of being left in God's sovereignty to those successive and ferocious beasts. The rising of the beasts out of the sea, upon which the four winds of heaven strove, portrays, probably, the vast commotion of peoples that preceded the formation of the four great empires. And it is an interesting fact, that the foundations of those states which afterward became possessed of the imperial power, were all laid about the same time. They emerged from obscurity and political chaos pretty nearly together. God, in His sovereignty, gave power to each in succession. First, there was the Babylonian, then the Medo-Persian, then the Greek or Macedonian, and, lastly, the Roman.

In this case John sees but one beast rise. The sea sets forth a troubled state of nations, and the fourth and last beast mentioned by Daniel, is seen by the prophet coming out of it. The first three beasts had had their day, and they were gone. The fourth or Roman empire had followed, and was then in being and power. It was the authority of the Roman Beast, which had, at this very time, cast John into Patmos. It seems to be its final rise, previous to its destruction which John sees here, but what was to take place between its first appearance as an empire and this reappearance, is not yet described. There can be no doubt, from the description given, that it is the Roman empire. It is said to have "seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns;" the same things that we saw in Satan, (chap. 12:3,) where he was regarded as the possessor of the power of the world, and specially that of Rome. We all may remember how he said to the Lord Jesus, when showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for this is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." Now here he gives it to the Roman Beast. Satan was, of course, an usurper; but still he was the prince of the world in fact, and as such he has seven heads and ten horns. But as Satan, he does not present himself openly before men. He must have some representative or agent. He must disguise himself, and work through another, and take a human form and instrumentality; even as God was pleased to do the same to accomplish His blessed purposes of grace. And so does Satan-awful counterpart in malice of God's goodness in Christ! The agent described, through whom he works, is the Roman empire in its last phase. He took advantage of men's lusts for power, because that which is the object of ambition in the world is power. And here you have a vast imperial power, which was at first owned of God. As far as rising out of the sea was concerned, God could still have owned it; but when it is said to arise out of the bottomless pit, the source is in no way providential, but expressly of the enemy. But besides these seven heads and ten horns, there were upon the latter ten crowns. Let me just say that I have no doubt the ten horns ought to be mentioned before the heads: "having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads names of blasphemy." (Ver. 1.) Not that one would attach undue importance to the order, save that we ought always to be right; but the two clauses of the verse agree in putting the horns first, perhaps because the beast is regarded here as having these powers in actual exercise, whereas Satan had them virtually only. Blasphemy, not mere heathenism, characterizes his heads.

"And the beast which I saw was like a leopard." This was the general resemblance of its body, and it refers to the Macedonian empire, so notoriously marked by its swiftness of conquest. "His feet were as the feet of a bear," which refers to the Persian and implies great tenacity of grasp; "and his mouth as the mouth of a lion," -ing its voraciousness, as in Nebuchadnezzar's career and kingdom. Thus the Roman

empire, in its last stage at least, would unite in itself the several characteristics of the former empires. And indeed such was the ordinary policy of the Romans. They did not interfere with what they found in the various nations they conquered. They endeavored to incorporate into their own system whatever had helped on the power of those nations. They did not force their own customs upon others, but cultivated whatever they found advantageous; and turned it to their own use. So this Beast, as we see here, was made up of the diverse qualities of power that had given weight to its imperial predecessors.

But there is one remarkable difference from all of them, and even from its own original condition. "The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority." (Ver. 2.) This notable distinction is subsequent to Satan's fall from heaven. He wants to have a medium for acting universally upon men, in the center of the world's civilization and activity, for the short time that he is allowed to do as he pleases on earth. Accordingly, to the Roman Beast which had imperial authority providentially from God he gives his own peculiar dragon power. This is a thing that has never yet been seen on the earth in the full sense of the word—this union of the imperial authority with the positive impartation of Satanic energy. But the prophet sees more than this, connected with the Beast's investiture by the dragon. "And I saw one of his heads, as it were, slain to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast." (Ver. 3.) I am inclined to think that the wounded head was the imperial form of government. "(Comp. chap. 17:10). The heads that were, as we have seen," connected with the dragon (chap. 12:3) as well as with the Beast, represent the different forms of power which had existed successively. Of these one was to be lost, as it were wounded to death, but at this time was to be revived again through Satanic agency. All the world is surprised, and no wonder. They will be seized with extreme astonishment at the revival of the Roman empire, with more than its ancient splendor.

And now, if we look at Daniel, we find a remarkable fact introduced there, connected with its divided state at the close, and of course also with its previous divisions after it had ceased to exist as an empire. The image in Dan. 2 has got feet, "part of iron and part of clay." There is weakness consequently. That metal represents the original Roman element in its strength, while the clay was a foreign ingredient, which brought in weakness when it sought to coalesce with the iron.² "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." (Ver. 43.) This exactly accounts for the state of things found in Western Europe. The history of this part of the world was completely changed by the inroads of the barbarians about the fifth century after Christ. There was a time when one vast consolidated power had universal and undisputed sway—the iron power of Rome. But at the epoch named swarms of barbarians, near about the same time and from the north and east, came down upon the empire and assailed it at almost every point. It fell. But mighty as these barbarians were in overthrowing, they could only establish little separate kingdoms; and since then no hand has been able to gather up the broken fragments and put them firmly together again. It has not been for want of the disposition to do so; for, on the contrary, all sorts of expedients have been tried—sometimes the sword, sometimes policy, sometimes intermarriage—but in vain. And thus it has remained under the providence of God. There has been no unity, so that the prevailing and favorite expression of modern policy has been and is "the balance of power." It means really keeping a respectful distance among the scattered members of what was once a united body. Mutual jealousies and the spirit of independence in each have ever effectually hindered re-union. The ordinary aim has been, by the formation of parties among the powers, to check and prevent the preponderance of any one.

But though that wound seemed to be unto death, it was healed notwithstanding. "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed." That is, at the period of which the vision speaks, the Roman power is to be consolidated afresh: not as formerly, with God's good hand over it and controlling all, whatever might have been the ways of individual emperors; but all is abandoned to the will of the Beast as the immediate instrument of Satan. Satan can no longer accuse the saints before God, but now he is at work on the earth to produce open blasphemy against God. And this is first done by means of political influence. There is the Roman empire reorganized, the imperial power revived, and a head over it that gathers everything under his own control, so that at the world wonders after the Beast to whom the dragon had given his power, and throne, and great authority. In the next verse we have not merely this; but "they worshipped the beast saying, Who is like the Beast? and who is able to make war with him?" (Ver. 4).

What a fickle thing is man! No doubt just before there had been a state of anarchy and confusion, and thence the beast arose and becomes an object of wonder and worship to men weary of all their previous turmoil, and strife, and insecurity. Something like it was seen in a neighboring country. Men were convulsed by a revolution which tore up all the landmarks and filled their minds with anxiety and restlessness. And what came out of that? A strong hand takes the reins, a military despotism, a quasi-imperial power. And what was enacted on a small scale, because in one country only, will prevail in all the western powers of Europe. So that instead of men having things to themselves, some vigorous chief will take the rule; but it will not be the hand of man merely, but the dragon's power. God will permit him to have his own way; and so, for a short time, he is allowed to do his very worst. Then, beside distinct governments and rulers, each over his own country, there will be an imperial unity under one great head, who will wield their power and preside over all. Thus will be accomplished those desires of men that have hitherto proved but idle dreams, or, at most, abortive efforts.

There is a passage, I would briefly notice, in an early epistle which refers to what has hindered, and hinders still, the development of this and other allied wickedness. It is in 2 Thess. 2:6, 7, "And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only one who now letteth [there is one] until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed," &c. There is a restraint that God puts upon the lawlessness of the world; and I conceive the Holy Ghost who acts here below is the One spoken of here as "he who now letteth" or hindereth. Still, after the church has been taken away, God will carry on a testimony, though of another sort, and Satan will be kept in check for a season at least. This restraint will be maintained by the operation of the Holy Ghost in a providential way. When this dealing of God ceases, the Holy Ghost will no longer "let," as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; that is, the power which the Holy Ghost exerts over the world, and not merely in the church, will no longer be put forth, as now, to keep Satan under. "He who now letteth" will "be taken out of the way." People do not know how much they owe to this restraint of Satan from doing his worst. But the time will come when God will cease to hinder; and then Satan will for a season carry all before him on the earth. He raises up a person as head, and men are charmed with the grandeur of his energy, exercised as it will be without conscience towards God—charmed with the comparative ease that will result from having one person supreme over all. In short, they will have in many ways what is suited to meet the idolatry and pride of the heart. For men are, like children, constantly disappointed with their own schemes and even successes. Besides, having refused the love of the truth, they will readily fall into whatever snare Satan may put before them. So that, after a previous storm of revolutions, they will gladly fall down and worship the Beast and the dragon that gave him his power. But, further, the Beast's worship in the

day that is coming will be of a different character from common idolatry. They will not merely be adorers of him, along with gods many and lords many, as the heathen of old. There will be an utter denial of any god above the one who is adored as such on earth. This miserable being whom Satan fills will be the object of their worship; and the dragon shares it.

“And there was given unto him a mouth, speaking great things and blasphemy: and power was given unto him to practice (or continue) 340 months.” (Ver. 5.) Nobody doubts, I suppose, that this is connected with Dan. 7. The same kind of language is heard, applying to and for the same time. If we examine that chapter, some of the thoughts I have uttered will be found to be confirmed. It is said (Dan. 7:7) that the fourth beast differs from all its predecessors. “It had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up another little horn.” (Ver. 8.) There is nothing of this in the Revelation. The little horn, i.e. as such, is not mentioned there. But this is not all. Before him “were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.” He takes possession of the territory of three of the horns, so that but seven remain out of the ten. “In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man,” —the symbol of intelligence, “and a mouth speaking great things” (the utterance of pride, and blasphemy against God). (Compare ver. 25.) This is what brings on judgment from God— not, of course, the white-throne judgment of the dead, but the judgment of the quick, and of the habitable world. And so it is written in the 11th verse: “I beheld, then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” Now observe that there is this difference between Daniel’s prophecy and John’s—what Daniel says about the little horn John says about the beast. (Compare Rev. 13:5, 6, with Dan. 7:8, 25.) The reason is this. John gives us the character or principle, and Daniel the detail of historical facts. The fact was to be, that in the Roman empire there should arise ten kings, three of whom disappear before the force or fraud of another king, the little horn—a power obscure in its first origin, but acquiring actual possession of three kingdoms, and then becoming the real director of all the rest. In the Revelation (where of course it is assumed that what had been disclosed in Daniel is already known), the Holy Ghost does not go back to the historical details, but speaks as if the emperor and the empire were one.

I am bound to acknowledge “the powers that be;” but when Satan has given the Beast his authority, it is another thing altogether: we owe no allegiance to Satan. In point of fact, he is the one who leads on the Beast into all his own depths and heights of sin. For the beast “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” (Ver. 6.) The Roman empire is the chariot, so to speak, in which this furious rider is driving.

But let us look further at Dan. 7 “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them. (ver. 21.) And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hands until a time, and times, and the dividing of times.” It is the same period of forty-two months that we have here in Rev. 13: “a time,” which means a year; “and times,” two years; “and the dividing of time,” half a year. I have no question that it is the person referred to in Daniel, under the name of the little horn, who here appears under that of the Beast. There he is the “horn,” because Daniel gives us the gradual succession of the history, and adds the special Jewish part, the gift of times and laws into his hand; here, because he is viewed as having all the power and authority of the imperial system, he is called “the Beast.” He opens his mouth “in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” For this was the great object of Satan, who uses the Beast as his mouth-piece. It was from heaven he had been cast out, and God in heaven, and those whom He calls into relationship with Himself there, are peculiarly odious to Satan and to this self-exalting Beast. “They that dwell in heaven” are unbearable to them. There is no one thing that stirs the world even now so much as this. It does not always dislike godliness where connected with things on the earth: it can appreciate love in a measure, for men can selfishly profit by it. But the moment there is a godliness that cares not for the things of the earth—not merely that refuses the evil things, for they could understand that—but a godly person who rejects them when men are doing their best, i.e., seeking to be religious and to honor God in their own way, nothing so excites men’s hatred even now; much more so when that day comes. For then Satan has lost all power and place in heaven, and has only the earth to work in, and the thought of blessedness above is hateful to him. He endeavors to make men think that the Beast is God, and takes advantage, I suppose, of the prophecies in Scripture to make them believe that the predicted good time is arrived, that God is come back to the world, that men have nothing to do but to enjoy all the blessings of the earth and of the day spoken of when God was to scatter His enemies. Satan seeks that men should antedate this under himself and without God. He will know what is at hand and his own torment when that day arrives. He will endeavor to turn to account the very promises of God, for cheating the world into the belief that these times of chiefest evil are the days of heaven on the earth. This is the time described here, when conscience towards God will be completely null and void, and what was true of Pharaoh on a small scale will be verified of entire Christendom. It will be given up to judicial hardening and then destroyed. It is just what the Spirit shows us in 2 Thess. 2:11, 12, when God, grieved with this world because of their rejection of the truth, will allow man and Satan to do their worst together. “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” And I most fully believe not only that God will do so righteously, but that the righteousness of it will be apprehended by any soul who is subject to His word.

Here, then, we have the means by which Satan accomplished his purposes. He has given his vast power to the Beast, and now he makes him an object of worship. “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them: and authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him of whom the name is not written in the book of life of the slain Lamb, from the foundation of the world.” (Ver. 7-8.) Here is the same distinction that I have alluded to before. “All that dwell on the earth” are a worse class than the tribes, peoples, tongues, and nations, meaning those that have abandoned heaven and heavenly hopes, and are fully committed to the latter-day delusions. In the case of “every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation,” authority was given to the beast over them; but as to “those that dwell on the earth,” they are completely subject to him and to his malignant influence. “All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him.” That is not said about the others, but these are completely given up. When it says, “Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” the idea is not that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, though people commonly draw from it the inference, as in 1 Peter 1:19, 20, of the purpose of God. But the true meaning of the verse, I apprehend, is that their names were not written, from the foundation of the world, in the book of the slain Lamb. And, comparing this with Rev. 17:8, we find that the Spirit has left out a portion, which makes all clear by removing any doubt of the true connection. “And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.” The Holy Spirit has left out “of the Lamb that was slain,” and puts together the writing in the book of life, with “from the foundation of the world.” The language of Peter, &c., (1 Peter 1:20,) where he speaks of the Lord Jesus as an unblemished, spotless lamb, “who verily was ordained before the foundation of the world,” has quite another bearing.

Then comes a solemn word of warning, on which I need not dwell at length. "If any man hath an ear, let him hear." If any man leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any killeth with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (Ver. 9, 10.) That is a general maxim, true of any one; true even for the Beast. If he has been leading others into captivity, he is to go into that or worse himself if he has killed with the sword, he must also be killed. But it is specially intended for the guidance of the saints, who might naturally infer, from the wickedness of the beast and his league with the dragon, that they were at liberty to resist him. And there is, I believe, the reason why this is said, lest the saint should be tempted to forget his place or God's supremacy and sure judgment. Their place was not to take the sword in their own defense. If they did so, what would be the result? Even then, whatever their character, whatever the Beast's, God would hold to His principles.

They must expect what they sought to inflict. It is the law of God's retributive government. The Apostle Paul, in Eph. 6, does not scruple to use the voice of the law as to the honor due to a parent. "Honor thy father and mother... that it may be well with thee, and thou: mayest live long on the earth." Of course he does not mean that a Christian should look forward to living on the earth as a reward for honoring parents. It was a principle laid down of old by God, and the Apostle, referring to the earthly promise, merely shows that even under the law there was a special blessing attached to it. It was the first commandment with promise. So here the Spirit of God gives a general principle, true at all times, applicable alike to foes and friends. "If any man," &c.- it does not matter who. It is a false position for the Christian to assume the place of power in the world. What makes it the more striking is that the saints spoken of here are Jewish, who of all others might think it very right to resist with their might. If the Beast blasphemed and persecuted grievously, they might say, "Surely we are entitled to stand up in defense of our religion and our lives." "No," says the Lord; "if any man have an ear, let him hear.... he that killeth with the sword, must be killed by the sword." If He lets him have his way for a season, what is our calling? "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" —faith as regards God, and patience as regards the enemy: Thus God will so much the more appear on behalf of His sufferers. And if the place of faith and patience belongs to those Jewish saints who have a comparatively earthly position, how much more to us who have nothing but a heavenly one? (compare. Matt. 26:52.)

Our great business, next to enjoying Christ and delighting in His love, should be to cultivate what is according to His will: so that we should not give a false witness of what He is and has done for us. We are not of the world; and the moment we fall back upon the resources of nature, upon our own personal power, influence, or authority, we have deserted Christian ground. In family relationships, to act according to our place of authority is a perfectly right thing. Nor will the blessing of God be with those who do not maintain the relative place that God has set them in; as of a father or child, a husband or wife, &c. The affections, most important as they are, are not everything. God is to be respected in the order that He establishes and sanctions. These are things which are not touched by our heavenly place; on the contrary, this gives us an opportunity of showing we have got in Christ a fresh power for every legitimate relation. But to take our part as having an interest in this world is quite another thing, and not the place of the Christian; but rather to pass lightly over it, as those that know their portion with God in heaven. Christ is coming to judge the world, which God regards as guilty of the blood of His Son, and only ripening for judgment. This truth habitually before our souls would preserve us from much that dishonors the Lord in us as Christians.

May all we learn be used to our blessing in separating us from what is to end so dismally! The outward effects of conduct are not enough. The church is regarded as having the mind of Christ, and we are responsible to God to keep out of the secret snares and springs by which Satan is bringing about this evil. For we have to do with his working in a still more subtle way than his acts in the world. May we not forget what God is to us, for the present claims of His glory! We have the most blessed opportunity of being faithful to Christ now. It is vain to look wistfully at others, and to imagine what we could do if in their circumstances. God is equal to all the difficulty of our own position and time, and would give us the needed strength if we waited on Him. The only reason why we are apt to magnify the strangeness, &c., of circumstances, is because our eye is not single to Christ. When we see Him in everything, the danger, difficulty, and temptation are all at an end.

Ver. 11-18. The rise of the second Beast is strongly distinguished from that of the one already noticed. First, there was the Beast out of the sea; now we read, "And I beheld another Beast coming up out of the earth." The earth we have seen, all through the Revelation, to be the symbol of that which politically is established and in order—the proper scene of the testimony and ways of God and of settled human government. Its privileges may be abused; it may lapse into a state of frightful moral darkness; for it is just where there is any blessing from above that there is the danger of corruption and apostasy. The sea, on the contrary, is a loose, disorganized aspect of the world. Chronologically, too, this might intimate that the rise of the second Beast is subsequent to that of the first. When the seven-headed monster rises, all is in a state of agitation; but when and where the second Beast comes up, things are consolidated after a fashion. The land now is spoken of—no longer the water, the sport of every wind. But the personage described as "coming up out of the earth" is not a mere individual. It is a political, oppressing power that acts without conscience toward God—a beast.⁵ It may be, and I doubt not this is, one particular individual that exercises the power, as with the first Beast. But "Beast," as a symbol, does not mean an individual as such, but an imperial power, sometimes with revolving satellites subject to itself.

Next, this Beast was evidently of an extraordinary kind, for it is characterized by an imitation of Christ. It has "two horns like a Lamb." The Lord, we must have observed, through the Revelation, is often spoken of as the "Lamb." While seated upon the throne of God, while described as Himself the great Sufferer, actively sympathizing with the suffering people of God, He is seen as a "Lamb. But when the saints slip out of and abandon their proper lot of earthly rejection, the Lord ceases to be thus symbolized. He seems ashamed of them and retreats to a distance, and is seen as an angel and not any longer as a Lamb. The extraordinary thing we see here is that this Beast assumes to be like Christ. He has two horns like a lamb. He makes a sort of pretension to be like Christ in official power. While the horn is used as a symbol of a king, it may also mean simply power. It was so used when speaking of David, "the horn of his anointed," &c.; but still more is this meaning of it apparent if we look at the Lord Jesus, who is seen in this book as having seven horns and seven eyes. Clearly the seven horns there cannot be seven kings; so that the horns, according to the context, either might mean kings, or they might be simply power. In the former beast we are told they signify kings; but per se they need not, and here they seem not to mean more than power. It is not the perfection of power, as seen in the Lamb, but only pretension to it; there were two horns. The Spirit of God has been pleased to show us in chap. xvii. of this book, that the ten horns of the first beast are ten kings (chap. 17:12).

So far, then, all is plain about this second beast. It is a corporate power that grows up when all was formed and orderly, and consequently arising after the appearance of the first beast. More than that. He arrogates to himself the power of Christ (he has two horns like a lamb); but his speech betrays him—he speaks as a dragon. Out of the abundance of the heart, we know, the mouth speaks. Whatever he may appear to

be outwardly, when he does give utterance to the real sentiments of his heart, it is the voice of the dragon. To the former Beast the dragon gave his power and authority. But here there is more inward resemblance to the dragon. Of this the draconic voice is the expression. It is the great active power of evil in the latter day; and this is one difference between these Beasts. The first Beast is the one for show: it catches the profane world through the display of power and glory. The second Beast is much the more energetic of the two. It is the one that most takes the place of Christ—is a false Christ, or rather is Antichrist—i.e., the very expression of Satan in his direct opposition to Christ. When Satan was seen (chap. 12) waiting to devour the man-child as soon as it was born, he is not as the serpent, but as the dragon. And here, in order to the ripening of his last designs, this Beast speaks as a dragon.

But it may be interesting to look at some of the scriptures that apply to the second Beasts, for there is often a good deal of confusion about it; and it is not to be wondered at, for these two Beasts are so closely bound together in the last days, that it is a difficult matter to determine which of them is the Antichrist. The word "Antichrist" is only found in the epistles of John. And there we must look, if we would see what is implied in that name. In 1 John the Holy Ghost writes as to this to the babes of God's family. For it is not at all a true principle that the young in Christ are only to know Him for the salvation of their own souls. The reason, I suppose, for thus writing to them was, because they were in special danger from the snares and deceits of the enemy; and the Lord, while He preserves, does not want us to be kept blindfold. Christian guidance is not unintelligent. It is not the blind leading the blind, nor even the seeing leading the blind, but it is the seeing leading the seeing. God does give help and instruction; but the Holy Ghost takes particular pains to show that He appeals not to the saints' ignorance, but to their knowledge of the truth. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." There we learn with certainty what was working from and in the time of the Apostle John, what has been increasing ever since, and bearing a terrible harvest up to the present time, though the fruit of it, the Antichrist, may not yet be fully ripe. "Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." That was the proof—not good, as men think, but the deep evil of antichrist spreading. "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." What a solemn thing!

The persons displaying the spirit of antichrist were individuals that had once professed the name of Christ. In fact, there could not be an antichrist unless there had been some previous profession of Christ. There must necessarily be some truth; for Satan cannot invent. He can imitate; he can corrupt God's truth, and use it for his own purposes, and put it in new and evil forms, so as to give the appearance of truth to what is positive error—"for no lie is of the truth." Thus the great Antichrist is to come: but even then were there many antichrists. These persons, painful to say, had once been in the family of God. There they had been, outwardly in the place of children, but not of course in reality. Then "they went out from us, but they were not of us." Next, he says, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" But he goes farther. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is the first feature. But there are greater abominations. "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." There are two states spoken of here. First, there is the denial that Jesus is the Messiah, the last degree of that infidelity which every unbelieving Jew shows, who rejects Christ from that day to this. But the terrible thing is, that it is found in those who had once taken their place in confessing Jesus to be the Christ. Of him who will finally be the leader in giving it up and renouncing, it is said, "he is a liar." But more than that. He is not only a liar, but an antichrist "that denieth the Father and the Son." Jesus was the Messiah, and much more: the Father was displayed in Him. If I look at the Messiah as such, I do not necessarily and fully see the Father there. In Him is the truth of the kingdom of God; in Him the display of His power and faithfulness to His people. But there is something far more blessed than the kingdom; for when I have the thought of the Father, I rise, not merely into the region of divine power, but into that of the highest, holiest, most intimate affections. It is evident that what we know in the presence of God now, is an infinitely nearer thing than the glory that He will give or display by and by. This will tell others what His feelings are toward us, proving the love we are brought into now. We do not wait for the kingdom to know this; but by the Holy Ghost we draw near to God now, in the most blessed way in which He here reveals Himself. Of course, when we are in heaven, we shall have a more unalloyed knowledge of His love, an enjoyment never interrupted by the workings of a carnal mind or by worldly influences. Every hindrance will be removed—all idols will vanish—for every present thing, which becomes an object to the mind, instead of Christ, is really an idol. We shall be out of and above all this, when we are taken to be with the Lord. But the love of the Father is just as true and perfect now, and we, by the Holy Ghost, are privileged to enjoy it. We shall enter more fully into the love then, but the love itself is the same now.

It is the rejection, then, not merely of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, but of His divine glory as the Son, that brings in Antichrist. All the love of the Father has come out in Christ, witnessed by the Holy Ghost. That involves, not merely the Jewish revelation, but the Christian; and it supposes too that Messiah has not merely come and been rejected, but has brought out all His divine and heavenly glory. For His being the Son of the Father has nothing to do with the earth. His eternal Sonship is evidently a truth that is entirely beyond His Messianic right hand position. It would have been equally true, if there had been no earth or providential dealings. It was His eternal relation and glory: and therefore, when the Holy Ghost wants to bring us into our full place of blessedness, it is the Father that He brings out. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." Where? Here? Not at all. "In heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." So that the seat of our blessing is entirely outside and above the whole scene of the lower creation. And if a man utterly rejects and despises that, renouncing His glory whom he had once owned, what is he? An antichrist. What he does on a small scale, the Antichrist will do on a larger one.

I refer to the epistles of John, because there we have the Antichrist mentioned, not as a Beast, as in the Revelation, but as the end and chief of those who had once been in the family of God outwardly, had gone out from it, abandoning and denying the blessed truth about the Father, and the Son, which they seemed to have received. "He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." On the other hand, we read, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." God always makes the utmost account of His Son. If you deny the Son, everything is gone; whereas "he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." When I possess the Son of God and my heart finds satisfaction in Him, I know the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also."

Then, after exhorting them to let that abide in them which they had heard from the beginning, that so they might continue in the Son and in the Father, John closes the matter thus: "These things have I written unto you concerning them which seduce you." It was an evil that was at work from the very beginning -and what mercy is there even in this? As the evil did exist, and must be manifested at some time or another, God allowed it to break out then, so as to put His own revealed sentence upon it. We should never have dared to have said such strong things of those whom we had even known as friends or as brethren so called. Call them liars! How shocking and uncharitable! men would say. But the moment that any men set themselves against (or rather deny) the full revelation of the Son of God, the Holy Ghost knows no quarter; and

I believe that we ought not. If the heart is prepared for this, you will find another thing that goes along with it. Wherever unbroken self-love, sensitiveness, and tenacity reign about what touches ourselves, there is but little care for the Lord Jesus. You cannot have two master affections. When the heart is single to Christ, He lifts us above personal feelings; but where the heart's care is for ourselves, there will not be found much devotedness to Him, nor jealousy for His name.

In 1 John the Apostle refers to the spirit of the evil. "Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." Why does the Holy Ghost introduce it here? There are many false prophets, as had been said in the first verse, gone out into the world: and so I believe there are now. But it is a most difficult thing to realize it at the time in "which we live. We can see it in times that are past; but the great difficulty is the discerning of what is at work now. We are in the very same circumstances that the saints were in then. For as surely as the Holy Ghost continues to work so surely will the subtle power of Satan be there to oppose. "Every spirit that confesseth not, &c... This is that [spirit] of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." It is not the Antichrist fully developed yet, but the spirit of it working in the church, just as much as the Holy Ghost was working there. The earliest sphere is not in the profane world: it must begin with those who had once borne the name of Christ. Satan could not forge such a rebellion against God, but among those who professed to believe the truth and love of Christ. There is a notice of this in the second epistle of John, where it is said that "many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." It is no longer a question of justification by faith simply, or of the law, but a more serious thing still. It is Satan, not only attacking the work of Christ and seeking to get persons to add something and so to take away from its glory, but depreciating and denying the person of the Son. Important as the work of Christ is to us, the person of Christ is the center and substance of all truth and glory. In presence of such a theme, I desire not to discuss but to worship. The reason why persons care more for the work of Christ is because they rightly feel they cannot be saved without it; but once we have got peace of conscience, Christ's person becomes the most precious object of our hearts. He is God's delight; and what is most precious to Him, we shall find to be the most blessed, and full of blessing, for us. It is not merely he that denies Jesus Christ come in the flesh, but he that does not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an antichrist. The Holy Ghost becomes, if we may so say, bolder in His statements. Does He lower the standard, because Satan apparently gains ground, and becomes more and more audacious against Christ? And are we to say, "We must not be so particular now, because there is so much evil;" and "there is no hope, because the church is in ruins?" On the contrary, the Spirit, making provision for the latest time, uses stronger language than ever. He says (ver. 10), "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." We are to have nothing to say to him.

Not only was He not greeting us to be received into the church, the house of the living God, but not even into a Christian's house. He must have no sanction nor footing among the saints; for the Christian's house ought to be a fortress for the name of the Lord, a reflection of what the Lord loves and produces where He is owned and honored. No matter if it be only to the lady that he is writing—one who is not called to teach or to rule. But when it is a question of Christ, it is in vain to talk about her being a woman, as an excuse for laxity. She wants Christ; she owes all to Christ; and, if she is a woman, is she not bound to make Christ the first question, the object of her soul? Therefore, if any person touches Christ, no matter who or what she may be, her allegiance to Christ calls for promptness and decision. That at once becomes the governing motive to faith, and the one grand responsibility of her soul. Whether it be persons who have the spirit of antichrist, or the great Antichrist himself that is coming, antagonism to Christ is there; and this decides all to a true heart.

In the Revelation, Antichrist is described, not merely as a deceiver, but as a "Beast," as an earthly power which has a subject kingdom—an imperial system in fact, rather than a purely spiritual malignant influence, as in the epistles of John. If we look a little at some of the Jewish prophets, we shall find more about him. I refer more particularly to Dan. 11. Towards the close (ver. 36) we read these words "The king shall do according to his will.... and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods." Who can deny you have a self-exalting personage in the land of Judea? This is very plain; for lower down it is said that "in his estate shall he honor the god of forces: a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, &c..... And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." Now, I think that wherever the Holy Ghost speaks of a land in this way, as the land, it refers to the land of Israel. He speaks of it as the Lord's own land. This is confirmed a verse or two afterward. (Ver. 41.) "He (the king of the north) shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown." Thus a great northern antagonist is to come against the king (ver. 40) "like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen," &c. Most evidently, then, the glorious land spoken of here is the very country which "the king" had been distributing to his favorites. In short, he is a king in the land of Judea, and it is expressly said, that the period, policy, and conflicts described are "at the time of the end." Then "shall the king of the south push at him (the king in Judea), and the king of the north shall," &c.

If this be so, several points are cleared in these verses. First of all, a king, who does according to his own will, establishes himself in the land of Palestine. But while you may find the moral features that link him with the "Antichrist" of John, he is viewed here as an earthly power, and is thus connected with one of the Beasts of the Revelation. But more than that, he is to exalt and magnify himself above every god. This was a novel feature. The Roman emperors had honor paid to them, in life and after death, as divine; yet never above every god. But "the king" shall magnify himself supremely; and this in a land that was specially Jehovah's above all others, and amongst a people whom God had called out to be a witness against all idolatry; and yet this man claims a new and most audacious worship, as the Most High in God's land and temple (cf. 2 Thess. 2). For bad as Israel had been of old, enflaming themselves "with idols under every green tree," here we have the sight, hitherto unknown, of a man setting himself up as the supreme God. And yet he has an object of worship himself: for man must have an object which enslaves him, unless he be truly exalted, as alone he can be in bowing down before the true God. In reality he is most elevated when most subject to God. For man, unlike God, cannot suffice in and for himself without another. He must either raise his eyes to the true God or degrade them on a false one. Even the very person who will try to get all beneath him, as supreme object of worship, will himself have something that he is subject to. And so we find (ver. 37) that, while he does not regard the God of his fathers (which confirms his being a Jew), nor the desire of women (which, probably, refers to the Messiah), nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all, yet the Spirit of God shows us this apparent self-contradiction. (Ver. 38.) "In his estate shall he honor the god of forces." All others are to honor him, but he has got this false god whom he honors himself "with gold and silver, and precious stones and pleasant things. Thus shall he do with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory," &c. "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him He shall enter also into the glorious land," &c.

Now here plainly we have Palestine. The kings of the south and north are so called with reference to the land of Judea. The king of the north, described as coming against him with this large force, is the Assyrian, (so familiar in the prophets), while the king of the south is the then sovereign of Egypt. These two powers come up against "the king," who, I apprehend, is the Antichrist of Scripture. The Holy Ghost does not here describe his rise. There was no need to say who he was, but he is brought in quite abruptly. For if verse 35 be examined, you will find that it speaks of some who had understanding, referring to what took place in the time of Maccabees, when there was a celebrated and most wicked prince, Antiochus Epiphanes, that persecuted the Jews, many of whom then came out in a remarkable way. There might have been a good deal of nature and the spirit of the world in their feelings and actions; nevertheless they resisted all efforts to turn them away from Jehovah to idols. Some of them fell, and this was, as the prophet says, in order to try others, and "to purge and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." There comes in the space where the Spirit of God drops the past history. He first gives us the struggle between Antiochus and his adversaries, followed by the exploits and the sufferings of those who had understanding in Israel. The history of Israel is then in abeyance, and we are at once carried on to "the time of the end." Between these two points there is a suspension of their history.

What is the next thing? "And the king shall do according to his will." We are not here told anything about his origin or progress; we hear nothing whence he comes; we have only that peculiar phrase, "the king," as if this would be intimation enough who was intended. Nor is it the only place in Scripture where "the king" is spoken of. Look at the close of Isa. 30 and you will find "the king" introduced there in no less singular a manner. The reason, I believe, is this; that the Jews, while they were looking for Christ, were also looking for Antichrist, a great prince who should trample down the godly among them in their final tribulation. It was plain in prophecy and so understood by them. In this chapter 30, the Spirit of God describes two enemies of Israel. First in verse 31 it is said, "For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be broken down which smote with a rod." This is the king of the north that figures in Daniel, typified in the early prophet perhaps by Sennacherib, who was the Assyrian of that day, but of course only a foreshadow of the great northern enemy at the close. Then, again, it is said, "And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of shaking will he fight with it." Thus, although there will be such sorrow and trial, there -will be joy too: "it shall be with tabrets and harps." "For Tophet is ordained of old: for the king also it is prepared." This I believe to be the force of it— "for the king also." Thus, if the statement made be correct, you have at the closing scene, the judgment of God on these two great enemies of Israel—the Assyrian, and "the king" who is introduced here without a word of preparation. If we turn, further, to Isa. 57, the same thing appears. I refer to it the more, as perhaps some might argue that in chap. 30. "the Assyrian" and "the king" are identical. But in chap. 57. it would be impossible to maintain this. The prophet has just been describing the appalling moral evil of the last days among the Jews. Then suddenly he says, (ver. 9.) "Thou wentest to the king with ointment," &c. It is plain from this, that "the king" is some special antagonist of God, not attacking the Jews from without like the Assyrian, but setting himself up within as king over the people of God. It was not necessary to define what king, because it was a familiar idea to Israel, so that the Holy Ghost could introduce him without a word of preface. They knew there was the terrible king to come—the last great enemy of God and the Jews in the land. The Assyrian is an enemy of God and of Israel too, but not in the land; for he fights against "the king" who is reigning there. The last willful king is the object of attack to the last mighty Assyrian. Outrageously wicked as both are to be, they do not at all agree in their wickedness. They stand in each other's way. There never can be lasting peace between them, and this is exactly what the eleventh chapter of Daniel shows us. The 41st verse is not at all a description of "the king." He seems to be lost to view, and there follows the account of the proud "king" of Assyria. The Holy Ghost presses on to the end of the Assyrian's career, leaving that of "the king. "

Looking now at the New Testament, we shall find some new features about this king. In 2 Thess. 26 we have the fullest account of him that the epistles of the Apostle Paul afford. In verse 3 it is said, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come,] except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." There is first, the falling away, that is, the special apostasy. The man of sin is another and subsequent thing. The apostasy prepares the way for the revelation of the man of sin. The French revolution e.g. answers to the apostasy rather than Romanism, which confesses truths, but all of them put out of their right place. There will be a further and more terrible development of the apostasy, though this illustrates it. But there is to be more than that—the man of sin. Who is he? The Lord Jesus Christ was the man of righteousness. This is the antagonist—the man of sin— "the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." Just the same sort of moral features that we see in Daniel about "the king," we have in this man of sin. "So that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." There we have another point. He is evidently one reigning at Jerusalem, He sits "in the temple of God," which, I see no reason to doubt, means the literal and well-known temple there.⁷ At the same time, if anybody likes to apply the principle of this scripture to such as may pervert the place of the church and make it an engine and sphere for exalting himself in now, I have nothing to object. I dare say that it may legitimately be so applied at least in part; but I think that it looks on to a person who arrogates to himself the honor that is due only to God. "Remember ye not," the Apostle says, "that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity cloth already work," &c.

Just as the Apostle John says, "Even now are there many antichrists;" so here the mystery of iniquity was already working, only there was a person that hindered. "He who now letteth [will let] until he be taken out of the way." I do not the least doubt that the hindering thing is the power of the Spirit of God not merely dwelling in the church, but acting in the way of control in the world, as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. If it were simply the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church, the moment the church was taken away., the man of sin would be revealed. But it appears that the lawless one will not arrive at his full stature and manifestation immediately on the rapture of the saints. There will be an interval and a testimony which God will give. When this testimony disappears or is put down by violence, the man of sin comes out full-blown. This seems to be the hour when the Holy Ghost ceases to restrain. He lets men show out then just what they are; and all their wickedness comes forth. The Holy Ghost thus no longer controlling the earth, Satan will be allowed to mature his worst plans for a very brief moment.

This, I think, is the time, and such its character, when the hinderer or hindrance will be taken out of the way. The early Christians used for many years to pray for the continuance of the Roman empire, because they thought it was the letting thing; that gone, they expected the lawless one to be revealed forthwith. And as its diabolical form is assuredly to arise after a previous existence and extinction, there was a certain measure of truth in their thought. But the Roman empire has long been extinct, and yet the man of sin, in his full development, has not yet been revealed. The reappearance of the empire, not its extinction, is the critical epoch; and that will depend on the Holy Ghost's ceasing to restrain. When it does take place, all the evil of man and of Satan comes out without measure or disguise. "He who now letteth

[will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the shining forth of his presence.”

Rev. 19. describes this destruction. In that chapter, (ver. 20,) after a previous description of the coming of the Lord in judgment, it is said, “The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him.... These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” They are, without doubt, the same systems or persons already characterized as the Beasts from the sea and the earth in Rev. 13. Now, it is plain that one or other of these two Beasts is Antichrist. The question still remains, which of them is that man of sin? Is it the great power of the world, the Beast that rises out of the sea? Or is it the other energetic Beast that rises out of the earth imitating Christ in royal and prophetic power? Disposed to think it is the latter,⁸ I can frankly allow that I see difficulties, and believe it is not a thing to be dogmatized upon. Indeed these Beasts are so closely linked together in their actions and objects, and also in their final doom, that we cannot be surprised if many find it hard to decide, or if intelligent minds come to different conclusions. But the more that I weigh what is said in the Apostle Paul about the man of sin, and in the Apostle John's epistles about the antichrist, my mind looks out for the Beast that has most appearance of rivaling and opposing Christ. This I find emphatically in the Beast that rises out of the earth.

Let us now consider a little what the chapter further gives us, bringing the light that we have gathered from other parts of the Scripture to bear upon our inquiry. After the description of the Beast in verse 11, we read of the exercise of his power (ver. 12). “He exerciseth all the authority of the first Beast before him” (i. e. in his presence). He is the energetic power, the one that cares much more for real influence and energy than for outward show, which was what the first Beast most valued. “He caused the earth and those that dwell therein to worship the first Beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” Observe again here that those that dwell on the earth are abandoned to his delusive power.

Some, seeing that the second Beast works to procure worship for the first beast, have conceived that 2 Thess. 2 negatives the idea that the second Beast is the same as the man of sin; because there he is represented as allowing no other object of worship than himself. But it is manifest that there are three persons who are closely connected together in this scene—the dragon, the world-power or first Beast, and the politico-religious or second Beast. It appears from Rev. 13:4, that the dragon is worshipped as well as the first Beast; so that whether we suppose the first Beast, or the second, to be the Antichrist and man of sin, the difficulty would remain nearly the same. In either case, the worship is shared by another. In point of fact, they are the Anti-Trinity, and find their bond in the unseen power of Satan.

The second Beast is very important. He is the really active power in the Holy Land. The Beast out of the sea has his dominion over the west, with large influence beyond it; but Palestine or Jerusalem is not his sphere, save that he destroys the witnesses and falls there. It is the second Beast that is the great power known to the Holy Land. “He doeth great signs, so that he maketh even fire come down from heaven unto the earth in the sight of men” (ver. 13). What imparts such deep and painful interest to the miracle is this: it was the special sign whereby Elijah confounded the false prophets of Baal. When the whole question lay between God and Baal, what was the turning-point that decided the claims of Jehovah against the false god? It was this very thing—fire coming down from heaven. It had been a familiar token in Israel, and one that they might justly connect with the direct approval and power of God. For He had caused fire to come down from heaven at various times, as a signal proof of His approbation. Fire came out from before the Lord when the priests were consecrated; the same thing, too when the temple was built and hallowed by Solomon. (2 Chron. 7) “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.” It was the crowning evidence of Jehovah's presence connected with Israel—of His presence filling the scene and accepting their sacrifices.

Here, then, is this frightful imitator and antagonist of the Lord Jesus, who sets himself up to be the God of Israel as well as the Christ. The true Messiah was the God of Israel, and here we find His majesty and claims and power emulated; the Antichrist too must cause fire to come down from heaven. I do not say fire really from heaven, but the appearance of it; in the sight of men it was fire coming from heaven. As Satan could imitate, so here was this wicked power, whose presence was after the working of Satan, doing apparently what Elijah had done. The same proof that Elijah had given for Jehovah against Baal, is the one that he offers here in his own name. It is an awful scene, and still more so if compared with the passage in 2 Thess. 2:9. For, sad to say, the very same words that are used in speaking of the miracles of Christ, in Acts 2:22, are applied here by the Holy Ghost to the man of sin. “Jesus of Nazareth,” said Peter, “a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs.” So in 2 Thess. the lawless man is one “whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.” The peculiar signs of Christ, that men should know the truth, are imitated by this impostor. He performs for falsehood similar things, and men are completely taken in and deceived.

What prepares the way for such an end is the dissatisfaction that men will feel with Christendom as it is. I acknowledge that they justly speak evil against the state into which Christianity has got. When it loses its heavenly separateness, and is mingled with worldly principles, confusion is the result. They forget that Satan is the god of this world. Hence he has blinded them entirely as to what the church of God is, and what is due to the name of His Son here below. Christ is plainly left out of the question, and even the truthfulness is wanting, which would be required by men in the commonest things of this life. It is not that one would desire to say a word against others; but God forbid that one should not judge, with all heart and conscience, a thing that is even beneath common honesty in the things of this life. When the church, or the individual Christian, ceases to judge, or if it condemn in heart, allows in practice, in the holiest things, that which a natural man does not in human and social relations; so that even the very world can see that what clothes itself with the name of Christ is all wrong—when such a time as this arrives, can God longer refrain? Judgment is coming apace; and what a mercy it is that God has given us something sweet as our hope and happiness, and not the perpetual dark foreboding of most certain judgment! Our portion is outside the sphere of the world. Judgment there must be before the world can be fully blest. If a person were merely to dwell on evil and its judgment, do you think it would give power to act for good? It is not the showing up of what is wrong, but bringing grace and truth to act upon our souls that gives power; otherwise, it might only be getting out of one form of evil to fall into another. The only real security is the getting near to Christ: we help other souls just so far as we put them in contact with Him.

We have seen, then, that this great enemy of God will be permitted to do wonders in imitation of the power of Christ, and in support of his claim to be Jehovah. It is not surprising that he deceives those that dwell on the earth. And what rapidly prepares the way, and ripens men for all, is, that they are now listening to Satan, who has been dissolving confidence in the miracles of Christ, and the scriptures which re: late them. Thus, when men not only review, but see, the horrors of what has taken place in Christendom under their eyes, and when they are left without the love of the truth in their hearts, they will be at the mercy of Satan. Then, when men's desires are gratified without conscience,

and God Himself, in righteous retribution, sends strong delusion that they should believe the lie, (saying to them, so to speak, "You have refused the truth that you might be saved: now, then, have all you like,")—then this personage comes forward, and these wonders are done that affect to be signs from heaven. Is it amazing that they fall down and worship the Beast and his image?

(To be continued.)

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 13:11-18 and Revelation 14, Lectures on

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

It is Satan, of course, who is behind the scenes; but his slave, the second Beast, "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the Beast: saying to them that dwell on the earth,¹ that they should make an image to the Beast which had the wound by a word and did live. And he had power to give life (or breath) &c., that the image of the Beast should both speak and cause² that as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed." (Verses 14, 15).

Observe, by the way, a further proof that this second Beast is after the final rise of the first Beast; for he causes an image to be made "to the Beast which had the wound by a sword and did live." "And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive³ a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, the name of the Beast, or the number of his name." (Verses 16,17). That mark was a seal of subjection or slavery to the Beast.

"Here is wisdom. Let Him that hath understanding count the number of the Beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number [is] 666 (ver. 18)." I do not pretend to solve any such question as this. It would be easy to repeat what others have thought. Some of the early Christians, especially the pious Bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus, supposed that it was "the Latin man." Others have found various names, in accordance with their polemics and prejudices. Romanists discovered in it the enigma of Luther; Protestants, the name of more than one Pope. Mahomet in ancient, and Napoleon in modern times, have been imagined. But are such notions better than conundrum? It is not the way of the Spirit to occupy God's people with reckoning letters or numbers after this vague fashion. May we not be satisfied that this is one of the points of detail left for "the wise" of the latter day, and that when the time comes, the clue will be given, and all the light that may be required? For there is in the ways of God a sort of economy, at least when we come to matters of detail and application. Just as He does not give a saint the strength to bear him through a special trial, till it is at the doors, so the Lord may only vouchsafe the needed instruction about this number when the man himself appears.

The application of the prophecy to a particular person will be the point then. It seems premature and useless to discuss such a question till the parties are on the stage. The wise shall understand then, and all will be as clear as day to them, but not to the wicked.

(See Dan. 12) The general truth, however, is plain. There is this second "Beast," the active, energetic power that opposes Christ; but when the day of reckoning comes, and the judgment of the Lord is upon him, he will be no longer spoken of as a Beast, but as the "false prophet" that wrought miracles. (Rev. 19:20.) Supposing the second beast to be Antichrist, I am inclined to think that there is a spurious imitation of Christ in his causing the first Beast to be worshipped. The Lord Jesus spake and wrought for the purpose of exalting God the Father, while the Father Himself makes Christ the special object. "Let all the angels of God worship him," (the Son,) and, again, "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." So it is with this Beast. He will help to exalt the great world-power, but withal he equally, and yet more in spiritual things, exalts himself. He has horns like a lamb. That is, he pretends to the power of Christ. But he speaks as a dragon (i.e., the expression of his mind is Satanic.) Being a Beast, it is intimated that he is invested with temporal authority; while he is also expressly designated a false prophet. Thus, it is a personal antagonist of what Christ was and will be, rather than of what He is.

Popery—Anti-Christendom, if you will—is a travesty of Christ's priesthood, and will perish with all that partakes its sin in the gainsaying of Korah. But here (when Christ, having closed His heavenly work, is about to assume His earthly royal dignity), is one who opposes and exalts himself in the city of the great king. For it is the Holy Land that is the central seat of his power and deceits. He is, I think, the person that the Lord Jesus referred to in contrast with Himself, in a passage just quoted in part, where He sums up all in a few little words (John 5:43); "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." The Jews would not have Him who came from the Father. His sent One and servant, though His equal in honor and power, had so come and been refused. But there was one whom they are to receive, one who will flatter and exalt man in sin; for he will own no authority higher than his own, and this is the echo of man's will. Him I believe to be the personage we have here—one who, as to actual territorial dominion and external splendor, may have a superior, but who, in point of spiritual energy and weight, is pre-eminent.

Having already given so fully that which seems to me the true view of the very important chapter which has just occupied us, I need not say much of counter expositions, many grounds of which have been already set aside by anticipation. Mr. Elliott is perhaps more than usually confident in his hypothesis that the Beast from the sea represents the character and history of the Roman Popes and Papal Christendom, and the two horned Beast the Papal clergy, with the image of the Beast as the Papal councils. It is impossible to call this, at least, the Protestant interpretation. For even Luther made the first Beast to be the Latin secular, the second the spiritual, power; while Bullinger viewed the former as the Pagan Roman empire, as did Foxe. Brightman, no doubt, was even more zealous than Mr. E., for he makes both Beasts to set forth the Popes. But what is of more consequence, the learned Joseph Mede, and, as far as I can collect, Dr. Cressener, Jurieu and Daubuz certainly, rejected these notions, regarding the first Beast as the Roman secular empire, and the second as the ecclesiastical Beast, though with characteristic points of difference. So, in the main, Sir I. Newton. If we inquire of their successors nearer our own day, the case is no better by Mr. E.'s own account." The explanation of this first Beast as the secular Emperor and Empire of Western Christendom, and of the second Beast as the Pope and Pontifical Empire, so as most of our modern English expositors have taken it (e.g. Faber, Cuninghame, Bickersteth, &c.) I conceive, to have been one of the most plain, as well as most fatal, of Protestant expository errors." (Vol. III. p. 100, note 1.) Surely, then, if so plain and fatal, Mr. E.'s elaborate array of evidence, and acute correction of the Protestant expository error, have been successful with every fair mind Alas! no. Perhaps the chief independent exposition, since the *Horae Apoc.*, is the *Rationale Apocalypticum* of Mr. Alfred Jenour (2 vols. 8vo, 1852); and there I read that "the wild Beast from the sea" must symbolize an empire about to rise after the ancient

Heathen empire had been destroyed, and which would be, as it were, that empire revived. It must represent too, I think, obviously a secular empire, not a spiritual or ecclesiastical dominion. There is nothing to indicate that it partakes in any degree of a spiritual or ecclesiastical character. And I cannot, therefore, but express my astonishment that so many commentators should have acquiesced in the interpretation which makes this sea born wild beast the Papacy. There is not a single feature in the description of the beast itself that can with propriety be so applied. It is, as I have said, a secular not a spiritual power we have here delineated." (Vol. 2. p. 75.)

On the one hand, then, I agree with Mr. Elliott that it is impossible fairly to interpret the Beast from the sea of the empire founded by Clovis and completed by Charlemagne. Neither the seven heads nor the ten horns, neither the dragon-character, nor, in any sense, the duration, can bear a reasonable application to it. On the other hand, I am compelled to agree with the earliest down to the latest, and including some of the very ablest of Protestants, that not the Papacy is meant but the secular Roman Empire. The conclusion is irresistible. Allowing an inconclusive accomplishment in the Papacy and its clerical supports, I steadily adhere to the conviction that the future alone can exhibit the fulfillment of all the features predicted, without constraint and in all their strength.

It is not true that the Papacy has the command of the Western powers which is here supposed, still less practices for 1260 years with such unlimited dominion.

It is not true that the Pope has authority given him over every kindred and people and tongue and nation, even if you confound this with (instead of distinguishing it from) the dwellers in the Roman world. It is not true that the Pope is the object of all the world's wonder, nor that the confession is extorted, "Who is able to make war with him?" Nor do all, save the elect, in Western Christendom worship him. Need I show how palpably inapplicable is the second Beast to those wolves in sheep's clothing, the Papal clergy? Do they exercise the enormous power, all the power, of the first Beast? And in what fair sense do they perform great miracles or signs, so as to make fire come down from heaven in men's sight? Is it possible that any person, save blinded by system, could be content with such an accomplishment as the wicked and idolatrous figment of the mass, or the lightnings of the Vatican?

The Lord grant that we may deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and this, not only for wrath but for conscience sake! Yea, may we be separated to Christ in a spirit of heavenly grace! How base to think we can take care when the time comes? Baser still, if possible, to plead that the church of God will be previously taken out of the way to heaven—that because all will be right then, we can afford to do wrong now! Remember, that meanwhile, as the Apostle said, are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. Now, if you are allowing the spirit of the world, or are trifling with any of the influences of antichrist at the present moment, what would you do if exposed to all the fearful persecutions on the one hand, and to all the temptations on the other, of the day when the man of sin will be revealed? God's grace might strengthen me to face all danger, and to refuse every blandishment, rather than abjure the true and worship the false God and Christ. But is it not most solemn and humbling if I join (no matter what the motive) in any fellowship with known evil?

And here is the great, moral, present value of prophecy. I see the frightful fall at the end, and can trace the stream that runs down to it. Perhaps the way is long and winding, and the river does not seem so perilous; but look a little lower down, where the word of God lifts up the misty veil which shrouds the future, and behold the fatal speed with which all who float there are engulfed to their utter destruction! There are many currents connected with the world, and I may not see, in their sources and first floorings, the full extent of the evil which is the inevitable result. In prophecy God graciously shows me the end from the beginning; so that, if I heed it not, I am dishonoring the warning of His love, who would have me "knowing these things before." Let us also beware not merely of one evil, but of its every form: especially let us not meddle with it, wherever it assumes a Christ like form in association with the world. Here we have the end of the open, blasphemous power, as well as of the more active and subtle spiritual evil of the crisis.⁴ Men will be caught in one or other of these snares—the bold infidelity or the religious gravity of the last days. However they may differ in appearance, they are found in the strictest, saddest, most fatal union at the close. The Lord grant that our hearts may be kept looking to Christ and waiting for Him from heaven! There is no full comfort or blessing, except so far as the eye is single to Him

(Continued from page 224.)

The Prospect, Love of Jesus, The

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In looking at Rev. 1:5, 6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love thinks of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regulates itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself—a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare. Secondly, love visits its object. It could not be content with merely thinking: the same principle that leads love to think with pleasure, induces it to visit its object; and, moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation and disinterestedness, in the visit as in the thought. It does not think upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of any one, neither does it visit in order to effect such ends; it has its own real substantial enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting its object. Thirdly, love suffers for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely thinking of or visiting its object—it must suffer. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its object; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because it will express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No: it simply contemplates its object, in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it. Fourthly, love exalts its object. This is the highest point. In the exaltation of its object, love sees the point of previous thought, visitation and suffering. Hence, love feels exquisite happiness in exalting its object, for in so doing it reaps the wished-for harvest. Let us now apply the above blessed characteristics of love to the Lord Jesus, and see how His love exhibited all of them. Did not He ponder in His own eternal mind His much-loved Church before the foundation of the world? Yes, truly; "His gracious eye surveyed us ere stars were seen above." Did He rest satisfied with merely thinking about us? No: He laid aside all His glory; He came down into this cold, heartless world, as into a vast quarry, from whence He hoped to hew out stones for the temple. He made His way down into this "rough valley" of ours, which had "neither been eared nor sown." "The day spring from on high hath visited us;" but He did not rest satisfied with coming down to look at us in our misery and

degradation; He determined to suffer for us, to groan, to bleed, to die for us; He hath washed us in "His own blood," which marks the intensity of His suffering for us. What, then, was all this for? Why those ineffable sufferings of Jesus? Why the groans and bloody sweat in the garden? Why the mysterious hours of profound darkness, together with the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Simply that the love of Jesus might exalt its object. And He has exalted His object, yea, to the highest point of elevation: "He hath made us kings and priests unto God." Thus we have seen how the love of Jesus has thought of, visited, suffered for, and exalted its object: this is for our comfort. But then we should remember that if we love Jesus, we too will often like to think of Him, to contemplate His grace, ponder over His perfections; moreover, we will pay frequent visits to the secret of His sanctuary, not to gain a name as persons of much prayer, but simply to indulge the desires of our hearts after Him " who is the fairest amongst ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Again, we shall be ready to suffer for Him, not in order to commend ourselves to our brethren as persons of great energy and zeal, but to express the high estimation in which we hold His blessed person. Finally, it will be our constant effort to exalt Him in every place; our constant cry will be: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Let us earnestly pray for such a deep tide of divine love in our poor cold, narrow, selfish hearts, as will make our service not the more spirit of imperfect zeal, kindled by the unhallowed spark of human opinion, but the calm, steady, constant flow of unalterable affection for Jesus—that affection which has its primary joy in pondering over its object, ere it comes forth as an actor or a sufferer in His cause.

C. H. M.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 20, Lectures on: Part 3

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

For why should not God bring back the creatures that He has made, and about which He takes a far greater interest than men suppose, to a state at least as good as that in which they were created? Why should not God root out all the evil consequence that sin has brought in, physically as well as morally? Because the sin of Adam had effects far beyond his own race: all that was put under his dominion got into ruin and disorder. And this is not a mere imaginative notion of ruin, nor a fanciful exposition of Old Testament prophecy. It is the doctrine plainly and positively laid down in Rom. 8. It is written there, that "the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that had subjected the same." There you have the fall of him that was over the creature. He fell; and creation, being under the headship of Adam, fell along with him. It was he who made it subject to vanity; misery and death came in through him. For there is no reason to suppose that death would have reigned with regard to the brute creation of the Adamic world, any more than with regard to man, if sin had not entered. I am aware that the wise men of this world often speak of fossil remains which show the death of animals before man was created. Into such disquisitions I do not enter, but would only say that there was not the same state of things under Adam. Supposing, now, the facts and inferences of geologists to be sound—whatever living creatures may have been made and destroyed in the earth, before Adam was created, scripture is entirely silent about; and so I desire to be in expounding it. They are questions of no moral importance, and, therefore, a Christian need not meddle with them. I add that these theories, if true, do not contradict scripture in the slightest degree. For there is not a trace of man connected with that state of things which preceded Adam; and scripture passes over it, hastening to what is immediately connected with him. When the human race begins upon the earth, the moral dealings of God are gradually developed. But man quickly fell, and then creation was degraded through its fallen head. Death, as far as regards the Adamic world, entered through the disobedience of Adam—death, directly as to men, and as a consequence, its ravages spread throughout all the lower living creation.

When the Second Adam, exalted above the heavens, shall come again, He, will not merely have such a dominion as the first Adam had, when all things in heaven and earth shall be put under His glorious sway. There is not a single spot nor creature of God's universe but what will feel the effects of His glorious power, whereby He is able to subdue even all things unto Himself. Thus, if once man fell bringing in sin and death and misery, and if all the attempts of the race to remedy the mischief, outward and inward, have been but expedients and no real cure, the Lord Jesus will be the good and, sovereign and almighty Healer of every evil and sorrow of creation. And God will have such joy—His own joy—in relieving all the wretchedness that sin had brought about according to His estimate of the worth of His Son. And if all, up to this time, will have been but the filling up of man's cup of woe, how blessed will be the time when God reverses the history, and when His own Son, no longer rejected and despised, shall fill the throne of His earthly and heavenly glory! When all wickedness shall be put down, and righteousness forever exalted, not by bare power and glory, but by the One who in grace had borne all the sorrow first, and suffered the consequences of all the wickedness, according to the full holiness of God, upon the cross! And how sweet to think that God will there show that there is not an evil, nor a degradation, nor a pang for which He has not some suited and glorious answer in and through His Son! For He will then put forth all His might to glorify His own Son in the presence of all flesh, even of those who sent the message after Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But when the Blessed One returns, having received the kingdom, and will reign as the risen exalted Son of man, all creation will feel the gladdening effects of the Savior's headship and rule.

The Lord will exalt Israel on earth and make them, who have been so peculiarly His bitter enemies, to lead the song of praise with their once rejected Messiah, now in the midst of the congregation. Then it is that they will take up Psa. 100, the psalm of thanksgiving, and will invite all lands to come and praise the Lord; yea, to enter His courts with praise. What a contrast to all that has gone on, or is going on still! How different from the hatred which the Jews have ever shown against the mere sound of grace going out to the Gentiles! For when Paul tells them how the Lord had said to him, as he prayed in the temple at Jerusalem, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," they heard him to that word; but it was more than their proud hearts could brook, and so they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: it is not fit that he should live." But how will grace have changed and enlarged the narrow hearts of Israel, when they will themselves go forth with the invitations of mercy to the Gentiles, who had insulted them in all their weary wanderings over the face of the earth, and who had trodden down Jerusalem during their appointed times!

The Jews, like Cain, have the mark of the Lord on them, that they shall not be utterly extinguished, in spite of their blood-guiltiness. But the Lord will give them repentance in the latter day, and thenceforward they will be the suited and blessed heralds of His grace to the uttermost parts of the earth.

This time of blessedness under the Messiah is what is found so often and so fully in the Old Testament scriptures. The Gospels, too, open with similar expectations on the part of the Jewish saints. But further light begins to dawn, as the rejection of Christ becomes more decided, till at length, redemption being accomplished, the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, and He brought out the full mind of God. Then it was that the distinction between the kingdom and the eternal state was made plain. (1 Cor. 15:24-28.) It was shown that the earthly reign of Christ, which in the Old Testament might have appeared unlimited, will, in reality, come to a close when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.

There are many who think that the millennial state of things is to be gradually brought in by the preaching of the gospel, and other agencies that are now in operation. No doubt they look for God to bless them in a still greater degree; for no Christian, perhaps, would say that present appearances warrant such expectations. But they think that if, instead of the few, there were many servants of God, and that if it pleased God to bless the word to the conversion of multitudes everywhere; and if a spirit of greater love and union and devotedness prevailed among those that love the name of Christ, generally, there and then would be the reign of Christ on the earth.

Now, I would ask, How do we know that there is to be a millennium at all? You answer, From the word of God. But, how is the millennium to be brought about? Humility would answer, We must learn this, too, from the word of God. We all acknowledge that the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. How is this to be effected? It is remarkable that, in the very scripture (Isa. 11:9) where these words occur, the Holy Ghost intimates that judgment must precede this time of blessing. (See ver. 4.) In that passage the universal spread of the knowledge of the Lord is made to follow His smiting the earth with the rod of His mouth, and His slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips—the very scripture that the Apostle Paul applies in 2 Thess. 2:8, to the destruction of Antichrist, the man of sin. The Lord shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness or manifestation of His coming.

It is perfectly true, then, and agreed, that there is to be a millennial time of blessing on the earth; and the answer to the question, how it is to be introduced, is this: the same scripture which reveals that blessed change tells us that it is to be brought in by the Lord's coming and smiting the wicked one (in other words, by judgment, and not by the preaching of the gospel.) The gospel is of all importance for calling souls from earth to heaven; but it is not the means of dealing with the whole world, and filling it with blessing. It is the means of gathering the church out of the world to Christ. When judgment has had its full course, then the Lord will send out His servants. The Lord will give the word, and great will be the company of those that publish it. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The present dispensation is one of gathering out in separation from the world. The gospel ought to be preached to all, but not with the vain hope that all are ever to believe it. Thus the Lord, in Mark 16, while bidding His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, takes pain to add, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." He prepares them for an individual and partial reception of it. Thus they would not be cast down, if they found but a few here and there who received the word of life. It might be but a Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. And what were they to the crowds who listened to the Apostle on Mars' hill? It was a matter of joy and thankfulness to hear of any who believed to eternal life, for it is thus that God preserves His servants from being cast down. It is well to know that all are not going to receive the gospel, but that God is accomplishing His own purposes. Therefore, when the Lord blesses the word and awakens the conscience of a poor sinner here and there, it is a cause of rejoicing.

But we know that as a whole, evil will increase, and "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." How can that be, if the millennial blessing is to be the result of the present or suchlike efforts of Christians in the gospel? But the Lord, is to smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and to slay the wicked with the breath of His lips, which is said to be like a stream of brimstone (Isa. 30:33).

Is that like the gospel? It is the exact opposite—a figure of destructive judgment. The gospel delivers from Tophet, but the judgment of the Lord casts into it irrevocably. Clearly, then, it is a judgment from the hand of God Himself, and not one which man, much less the church, will execute. It is not the business of the church to cast into Tophet. No power but God's can consign to hell.

But there is another thing that characterizes the millennium—the binding of Satan in the abyss. Can the church bind Satan? Will any one tell me that Satan can be absolutely hindered from deceiving the world by men? But there can be no universal blessing for the world till he is bound; and every Christian must acknowledge that God alone can either bind or crush Satan. He may employ an angel, or associate the saints with Himself, as it is said in Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." The church is united to Christ, and then will be actually with Him, who, as the woman's Seed, is to bruise the serpent's head; but the power is in Christ, and not in the church. He will put down all adversaries when that day of judgment comes; as it is said, "He will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron." (Rev. 19) And we shall do the same in virtue of our association with Christ. (Rev. 2) In the reign of peace (Rev. 20:4, 6) we shall still be associated with Him. It is by the church in its heavenly condition, not while we are on the earth, that Satan will be thus bruised.

But it is perfectly clear, on the other hand, that the millennium is not exclusively the reign of the glorified saints; the earth, as such, with its inhabitants, will be brought into deliverance and blessing. This we saw in Eph. 1:10, where the true key to its character appears—the union of heavenly and earthly glory under one and the same Head, in whom also we, the body, have obtained an inheritance. There will be Jews and Gentiles, blessed as such in their natural bodies on the earth, the subjects of the kingdom; while the glorified saints will be the instruments of blessing to the earth.

Now the earth is made miserable, and men hardly know how far they are gone in rebellion through sin. This is not all; for there is an unseen enemy, a dark and untiring adversary of God and man, who has his hosts of wicked angels subject to himself (Rev. 12), and use them as the instruments of his seduction. A 11 This will pass away; and those very scenes which are now filled by wicked spirits, the heavenly places (not of course the place where God dwells in His unapproachable glory, but the lower heavens that are connected with the earth) will be a part of the dominion of the church in glory, and the heavenly saints will be as much used to be the means of joy and blessing to the world, as the wicked spirits are now the chief agents of all its misery. They may for a little season emerge from their prison, after the millennium to lead the distant nations of the earth into a last conspiracy against the Lord; but they will never regain their former access to the heavenly places, where their influence was the more subtle and dangerous.

Then will dawn the day of the greatest glory for the world. Of course I am not speaking of the cross; for there is no exaltation Christ will ever have given Him that can be compared with the real, deep glory of His death. It has, as it were, put it into the power of God to show mercy,

according to His own heart; and, therefore, there is not a single joy of the millennium but what will flow from the cross, of Jesus. Nay, it has eternal consequences, and not for the millennium only. But the age to come, or millennium, while very important, and a time of wonderful blessing, will be imperfect. And for this reason. There will be men still in their natural bodies upon the earth, many of whom will be unconverted. Accordingly, this very chapter shows us that, after the termination of the thousand years, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." (Ver. 7, 8.) We do not read this in the Old Testament; for as it does not intimate the close of the reign, so neither does it show us the epoch when Satan will be let loose. The terms in which the judgment upon the evil one is spoken of there might be construed into a single stroke, which made an end of the matter.

From Isa. 24 we learn that the scene of the punishment of the high ones is to be on high, as the kings of the earth will be punished on the earth. It is evident that by the host of the high ones the Spirit of God does not refer to exalted men on the earth, (for they are in contrast with the kings of the earth,) but to the powers of evil in the heavenly places. (Compare Eph. 6:12.) This is exactly what we find, though with fuller detail, in Rev. 12; 19:20 The kings of the earth meet with their punishment on the earth, while Satan and his minions suffer, the host of the high ones, on high. Satan is cast out to the earth, and his angels are cast out with him Their place is found no more in heaven. The particulars are not given till the Revelation. That day will see the judgment of all foes above or below. For that this is the millennial day requires no proof.

Next in Isa. 25:6 it is said, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." It is a time of blessedness never known before. Nor is it confined to a certain number gathered out as now, but "in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast," &c. "This mountain" is said of the land of Palestine, because it will be to the whole earth the spot where the Lord will be exalted. Of course, this is to be understood morally, not physically. Remark what we have in the next verse. "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people." The Lord will destroy the darkness that is over the face of all nations now, "and the veil that is spread over all nations." But this era will be also characterized by the resurrection. "He will swallow up death in victory," evidently referring to the first resurrection spoken of in the Revelation. Then only is the victory complete. (Compare 1 Cor. 15). "And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." It is the time of blessing for the Jewish people, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." Here, beyond a doubt, it is persons upon earth that need to be saved. The church is saved already, and we do not wait for "that day". to come that our God should save us. They will be saved in the day of glory; we are saved in the day of grace. "This is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." There we have one of the neighboring enemies of Israel trodden down; for it is to be a day of judgment as well as blessing.

In ch. 26. it is written, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city," &c. In the latter part of it, which I would refer to because of its importance, Israel says, "We have been with child, we have been in pain.... we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth," &c. "Thy dead men shall live," (the words "together with" having no kind of business there,) "my dead body shall they arise." "Thy dead men," that is, the Jewish people, who are regarded, in a figure, as being dead; just as in Ezekiel, where they are represented as not only dead but in their graves. But as the Lord causes His wind to pass over those dry bones, and they live; so here, "Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise." Not merely thy dead body, but Mine. I own them—they belong to Me. Jehovah appropriates them as His, dead though they may have been. They are to be so no longer; they shall arise. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." This is not like the church. The heavenly saints do not enter into their chambers on earth, but are taken away to be in the Father's house in heaven. But here is a question of the Jewish people. They are comforted, and are told to arise out of their degradation, "for thy dew is as the dew of herbs." "Come, my people hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." The indignation that God had so long against His people will be turned now into indignation against their enemies. The Assyrian, used heretofore as God's rod for chastening Israel, must now meet with his own final doom. "For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." And yet this is manifestly the time when He introduces the millennium, not after it is over. The Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. Is the like the gospel, where instead of proclaiming the remission of their sins He comes to punish them? Not at all. Further, "In that day the Lord, with his sore, and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent: and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Doubtless there is a general reference to the wicked one, Satan, the ancient serpent. Only here he is not seen as one that had a place on high, but defeated and rejected here below. He is not spoken of with the same minuteness as in the Revelation, which gives us the full light of God upon the subject and the details.

Moreover, we find that at the end of the millennium God will show that the day of glory (the thousand years, which from the part of the day of the Lord, when Satan is bound, and the Lord Jesus reigns manifestly) will no more convert souls of itself, than the day of grace and the publishing of the gospel to the ends of the earth. For if the day of grace requires the immediate power of God to save an individual soul, of course the same power will be requisite here below in the day of glory. Whilst the Lord is there, evil will be kept down; there will no leader of man in his evil. But the moment Satan is allowed to come out of his place, and again exercises his power, we have plain proof that the heart of man is unchanged. He goes out to the four corners of the earth to deceive the nations, and gathers them together for destruction.

These nations are called by a symbolic name, which is a sort of allusion to the enemies of Israel spoken of in Ezek. 38, 39. But they are not the same, and must be carefully distinguished. For in Ezekiel Gog is literally an individual person—the prince of the vast northeastern territories and peoples, known in our time as the empire of Russia. Gog is to be the then leader of that country, which is called in scripture "the land of Magog." Indeed this is the positive meaning of the words rendered in our Bibles "chief prince." It ought to be "prince of Rosh." But when the Scriptures were translated into Latin, (which had a great influence upon succeeding versions,) the Russian empire did not exist and could not be known by that name. For the north of Europe and Asia was then merely inhabited by hordes of wandering barbarians, called Sarmatians, Scythians, &c. So when the corrector of the old Latin, Jerome, came to the Hebrew "Rosh," he thought it must be taken not as the name of a people, but as a common noun, meaning "head" or "chief," just as the Franks, besides giving their name to a neighboring country which they conquered, also meant "free men." Hence, probably, in our version "Rosh" was translated chief, which the Hebrew word might equally well bear, if a proper name were not required by the context; for "prince of chief, Meshech and Tubal" makes no good sense. Therefore, I suppose, the translators, not knowing what better to make of it, put the clause down vaguely as "chief prince of Meshech. and

Tubal.” However, it is well known that learned persons who had no light, or a very partial one, on prophecy -scholars who examined the subject a hundred years ago, concluded that Russia was meant. But what is much more important, the Greek version, or Septuagint, which was made two centuries before Christ, left it as ρῶς. They did not know what place or race was meant; but seeing that Meshech and Tubal were given as proper names, they understood the preceding word similarly. Thus, Gog is really to be “the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,” which will all be found in the Russian empire.¹ Ezekiel then shows that, when God restores Israel and plants them in their own land, Russia is to be the last great enemy that comes up to attack them, and meets with its own demolition from the hands of God on the mountains of Israel. His prophecy, I think, does not bear on recent events, save as these may lead on to it; much less is it to be confounded with the gathering of Gog and Magog described in verses 8, 9. It cannot mean the same as these; for the Jewish prophet speaks of a vast confederacy before the millennial, or at least at the very beginning of it; while in the Revelation it is after the thousand years are past.

Gog and Magog here are symbolical expressions, founded, it is true, upon the prophet of the Chebar, but entirely distinct. The word by Ezekiel has its accomplishment when Israel is restored. (See chaps. xxxvi. xxxvii.) Gog comes up when they are dwelling in their unwallied villages, and thinks to make them an easy prey: but the Lord interferes. Gog is put down and Israel live and flourish quietly in their land. Here they are symbols borrowed from Old Testament circumstances, but applied to a time long subsequent. The last enemy which Israel had to encounter before the millennium was the literal Gog the last rebellion after it derives its name from that well-remembered effort of the outside nations. Countless swarms from the four quarters of the earth, under the guidance of Satan, will repeat (never to be repeated again) what the Russian chief will have done before them. They will go up on the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about and the beloved city. Of course the earthly people and city are meant; for Israel will then be a body of saints, a holy people, and Jerusalem will be the beloved city, —not in mere name, but then, in truth, the city of the great King. These nations come up and surround them, and God will, if I may so say, be compelled to destroy them forever. “Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” (Ver. 9.) Fire is always the figure of God's judgment. Thus do they perish. Their leader is not touched by, this judgment: a worse fate is reserved for him “And the devil that deceiveth them was east into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also [are] the beast, and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.” His followers are destroyed by a divine judgment upon earth, but the devil, who had led them by his deceits, is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

But there is another scene that follows—the most solemn for man where all indeed is solemn. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sitteth on it, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven; and there was found no place for them,” (ver. 11). Mark it well. There are many persons who suppose this to be the time of the coming of Christ, and who consequently put the millennium before His coming. But this will not bear the light of Scripture. Without going to proofs outside the chapter, I would just take another ground, which is short and simple, and, to my mind, perfectly conclusive of the question. When the Lord Jesus comes, He comes to the earth from heaven. This is the universal belief, as far as I know, of all persons who have any defined thoughts about the matter. But such is not the case here, For the Lord sits on a great white throne, and instead of His coming from heaven to earth, both earth and heaven are all gone. It cannot be His coming to the earth, for there is no earth to come to. The entire system of earth and heaven, as they now are, will have vanished out of the scene—not annihilated but destroyed; for there is a great difference between those two thoughts. However, the earth is no longer found filling its own place; it has disappeared. The great white throne is not therefore on the earth at all; for, from the face of Him that sat on it, the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. Lest it should be thought that their fleeing away was a mere figure of speech, it is added that “there was found no place for them.” And it is said in 2 Peter 3, they shall be dissolved and their elements melt with fervent heat. Observe, then, that when Christ is seen seated on the great white throne, the earth and the heaven are fled away. What are we to draw from it? Either the Lord Jesus Christ must have come before this, or He will never come to the earth at all; for it would not be the same thing to suppose that He merely comes to the new earth, after all judgment—even of the wicked dead—is over. Now we know that “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” — “ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” The general faith of Christians is that He will come back to this earth. His feet shall stand in a day yet future on the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east, and which thenceforward is to be, not destroyed, but divided in the midst as a witness of it. These circumstances cannot apply to what the Apostle John calls the new heaven and new earth, but before the last physical change. When the great white throne is found, the earth is gone, and therefore the coming of Christ to the earth must have been before that final scene of judgment. In point of fact, too, we have had the coming of Christ already described in chap. 19. and His reign in the early part of chap. xx. This gives distinctness to the character of the great white throne.² Nothing can be more simple, if you take it in the order in which God arranges it. But man is ever perverse; and so he blots out the coming of Christ from chap. xix. where it is given, and imagines it in chap. xx. 11, where it is not and cannot be.

Observe, also, that the judgment of the great white throne is not a general judgment, any more than the resurrection spoken of here is a general resurrection. In fact, the mixed idea is mere imagination. I hold that every soul of man (i.e., of those that have died) must be in one or other resurrection. But Scripture shows us that the resurrection of the just is a totally different thing and at a different time from the resurrection of the unjust: they have nothing in common, save that in both cases soul and body must be reunited forever. There is no Scripture for an indiscriminate rising of all. A few passages are used to make out a show of proof. The Lord says in John 5:28: “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,³ and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.” But this does not show that they will rise at the same time. The hour is coming in which both these classes shall rise; but, instead of saying that they are all to rise in one common or indiscriminate resurrection, He takes pains to state that they that have done good are to come forth from their graves for a life resurrection, and they that have done evil for a judgment-resurrection. There are two resurrections, then, not a common one. The very passage that men cite to prove a general resurrection teaches, in fact, the reverse. The Apostle John's gospel shows their distinctness in character; his Revelation shows their distinctness in time.

Persons may say, “the hour is coming” implies that all are to be raised much about the same time. But the word “hour” is often used in Scripture (and indeed everywhere else) in a large sense. It might comprehend a thousand years or more; so that if one resurrection took place at the beginning of the millennium and the other at the end of it, it might still be the same “hour.” “The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it shall live.” (John 5:25). This refers to what has been going on ever since Christ was on earth up to this very moment. “The hour” there takes in nearly two thousand years; and surely it is not too much to infer that “the hour” in verse 28 might embrace, if necessary, a period equally long. Scripture decides it. The same John who shows us the rise of all the flesh from the grave, divided into two contrasted resurrections of men characterized by opposite moral qualities, shows us with no less plainness and certainty the interval between these resurrections. The chapter that we are now examining in the Revelation is the answer to

the question, and proves that there will be an interval of at least a thousand years between the two.

But this is not all. There is a deep fundamental difference in the nature of the resurrections, as well as a distinction of time. In the gospel of John, the first is said to be a resurrection of life, the second is one of judgment. In the former are the righteous; all who are judged in the latter are the evil. Our translators call it the resurrection of "damnation" though the real meaning of the word is "judgment." It is the same word that is used in a verse or two before. (Ver. 21, 27). "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." And it is necessary to bear this in mind, that Christ, while as the Son of God He gives life, as Son of man comes to execute judgment in His kingdom. He gives life to the believer, and executes judgment on the unbeliever. So there are two resurrections answering to these titles. There is the resurrection of life or the resurrection of the believer. It is the application to his body of that power of life which he has already in his soul. But those who have refused Christ, what will they have? The resurrection of judgment. They have despised Christ now; they cannot escape the resurrection of judgment then.

Looking then at Rev. 20, is not this what we have here? First there was the resurrection of life, of "those that have done good." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." What was said about them? They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. It is a life-resurrection. But look at the others, the wicked—"they that have done evil." "The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." What have you here? "The rest of the dead lived not again till," &c. So they do rise. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne." None but dead are there, and how differently do they appear before the throne! "And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works," (ver. 12). Now I fully believe that the saints of God will have all their works examined: what they have done in the body will come out. We shall have praise or censure according to our faithfulness or unfaithfulness, when the Lord Jesus takes His place on the judgment-seat, and we stand before Him and are manifested there. It is the Apostle Paul that tells us this. (Rom. 14; 2 Cor. 5). But the object of the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle John, is to contrast the two resurrections. Therefore not a word is said, in the account of the first resurrection, about our appearing before Him, that each may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad; but we are represented as judging others. Such is the way in which the life-resurrection is described. "I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." They do, of course, give an account of themselves to the Lord, and receive accordingly; but the Holy Ghost has His own wise reasons for omitting all allusion to it here. It is a resurrection of life in the Gospel, and of life in Revelation. But when you come to the rest of the dead that have not done good, when they are raised and stand before the throne, it is the very opposite of a life-resurrection. They have only done evil; and when the book of life is opened, no name is to be found there; for this is not a resurrection of life, but of judgment. They are to be judged according to their works, written in these other books; but their works are calling aloud for judgment. Their works being only and always evil, they are judged according to them; and what is the result? There might be a difference among them in some respects: there were great and small. But they were all alike in this—they were not found written in the book of life; and whosoever was not found written there, "was cast into the lake of fire." Not a word is said or hinted, that were written there. This is a resurrection of those who have no part in that book, and they are cast into the lake of fire. It is, as if God were saying, The books of their works call for judgment: is there nothing to be said in defense of these wretched men? The book of life is accordingly opened; but they are not found there: the last hope is gone, and if "any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." (Ver. 15). It is the resurrection of judgment. There is no life, no mercy there. Those that had their part in the life-resurrection had been raised long before, and never come into judgment at all; for it is said (John 5:24), "He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment (the same word as in verses 22, 27, 29), but is passed from death unto life "

Nothing then can be more certain than that this is a separate resurrection, distinct in character, and long severed in time. The resurrection of life had taken place long ago, and now comes the resurrection of judgment. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it," The depths which man could but imperfectly explore cannot hide for a moment longer. Nay, the unseen world, over which he has no control, is also forced to give up its miserable inmates. "Death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged each according to their works," (ver. 13). And their works condemn them. Not a word is said about them in the book of life, and they are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. They are raised from their first death to be cast forever into that place of torment, whence there is no escape.

The other scripture of most weight, often used for the purpose of proving a general resurrection, is the one in Daniel. What do we find there? It is written in chap. xii. 1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (meaning Daniel's people, the Jews); and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Evidently, this is not the millennium. "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." This is not the time when the church is delivered; for we have been delivered long ago through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. But since the cross of Christ, the Jewish people have only been in misery: that cross was their guilt. They cried "His blood be on us and on our children." The time of their greatest suffering is to be immediately before the hour of their deliverance. (Jer. 30:7) Our deliverance, as theirs, is through the sufferings of Another; but what we suffer is after our deliverance. For the Jews it is a different destiny. They have a tremendous tribulation to go through yet; and it is to be the worst they have ever had. But immediately after this their final deliverance comes—"At that time thy people shall be delivered," &c. They will not only be delivered as a people, but they will be saved and converted individually, according to God's purpose—"every one that shall be found written in the book." "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

This is commonly applied to the resurrection; but I am persuaded that it does not apply to the rising of the body. It is a figure which is taken from it indeed, and which supposes that great truth to be known. But it is the same kind of expression, and applied to a similar subject and end, that I have referred to, in Isa. 26:19, where Israel was described as "my dead body," and was called on, as one dwelling in the dust, to awake and sing. So here it is said, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This does not suit any scheme of interpretation, if it be applied to a literal bodily resurrection of good and bad at the same moment. You will observe that this is before the millennium. It is evidently before the time of deliverance and blessing. There is a time of trouble, immediately after which Daniel's people are delivered, and those who might have been forgotten (sleeping, as it were, among the Gentiles), reappear, but not all for the same end -some to shame, and some to everlasting life. (Compare, also, Isa. 66:20, 24.) This does not answer the purpose of those who quote the text. For their idea is, that there is the millennium first, and then the resurrection of good and bad. This resurrection, literal or figurative, is before the millennium, and after it is a time of greater trouble than Israel ever knew.

My conviction, therefore, is that Dan. 12 refers to the Jews. First, in ver. 1, those who are to be delivered are spoken of in connection with the land of Palestine. Then, it is shown that many of them who have been sleeping in the dust of earth, will come out of their degradation, will awake, some to everlasting life, &c. Some of those Jews, that are to come forward out of their hiding-places all over the earth, would prove to be rebels, and be treated accordingly; while others will learn that the Lord has wrought with them for His name's sake. We may compare this with Ezek. 37, where the dry bones set forth the house of Israel. No doubt can be left on any serious mind as to that passage; for the Lord Himself has interpreted it as the figure of the future resurrection of Israel. "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." And, if in Daniel it is said that some are to have everlasting life, Ezekiel says that the Lord will put His Spirit in them. It is a spiritual as well as a national restoration. So the passage in Daniel refers to a figurative resurrection of Israel, when some will awake out of their moral death.

We may now come back to Rev. 20 with the increased conviction that the doctrine of one general resurrection is a total mistake, and that God's word teaches a resurrection of the just, and another of the unjust. This which is spoken of at the close of our chapter, is solely of the wicked dead; it is a resurrection of judgment. I appeal to you, whether you could rest the salvation of your souls on your works? I admit that our works will be examined, and that we shall receive accordingly; but this is not the same thing as being judged according to our works. In the one case the person is accepted, but his works are reviewed for praise or blame; in the other, the person is judged according to works that are not mingled but altogether bad. For a natural or unconverted man has no life towards God; therefore he can have nothing but evil works to be judged for. Not so with the believer. No doubt there are works sometimes mingled, sometimes even worse in him; but he has a standing beyond all that, painful as it is. He has the new nature that God has given and will not take away. His works will be examined, and they have a most important bearing on the position that the Lord will assign him in His kingdom. To be saved or lost is never a question of reward, but of the grace and power of Christ. When you talk of reward, it is a debt due for work done; but when of salvation, it is never spoken of in Scripture as a reward of works. It is the work of Christ—the fruit of another's work and suffering, which God has given to us in sovereign love.

And when we stand before Christ, it will not be to take our trial for condemnation or acquittal: this would be to deny our justification and the value of His own work. All our ways will be manifested in God's light, and the Lord will bring us triumphantly through; but He will not pass over a single thing that has been done against Him. And as a Christian now can, before God, examine his ways, pass judgment upon them, and thank God for His faithful discipline, so it will be in a still brighter and more blessed and perfect way before the judgment seat of Christ. It will then be no question of being saved only, but of vindicating the Lord's glory and goodness. This is not a thing that we ought to dread: it is what we shall have to be thankful for through all eternity. For self-judgment even now is the best thing, next to the joy of worshipping God and serving Him faithfully through grace. We shall not have a word to say in defense of ourselves, but the Lord will have much to say for us. He will bring out all that we have done, and we shall receive according to it. For evil we shall suffer loss, for good we shall get reward.

But what a difference is here! The dead that stand before the throne; they have no life—nothing but dead works. They had not Christ, and what do their works deserve? They are cast into the lake of fire. Death and Hades are now no longer needed; they are personified as the enemies of God and man, and as such are, in the vision, (ver. 14,) cast into the lake of fire also.⁴

(Continued from page 314.)

Bible Treasury: Volume N9, First Resurrection, The

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Revelation 20:5.

The First Resurrection does not mean all rising exactly at the same moment. This is a mistake. We know that the change of all those caught up takes place in the twinkling of an eye; but it does not follow that various bodies are not raised at different times. For certain there are two great acts of resurrection—one when the Old Testament saints and the church are caught up to heaven, the other when Satan was bound after the beast and false prophet were thrown into the lake of fire, as well as Babylon judged. Thus (without speaking of the resurrection of the wicked at the close) there were certainly more acts than one, not to speak of the two witnesses put to death and caused to rise after three days and a half, when the spirit of life entered them, and they not only arose, but went up to heaven, as we know (Rev. 11). I speak not of anything that might be deemed exceptional or peculiar, but of two acts of raising saints.

From the manner in which resurrection is referred to in Scripture, does not God leave room for this? "I will raise him up at the last day." "At the last day" does not mean merely an instant of time. Whether it were the Old Testament saints and the church, or the Apocalyptic saints, if I may so distinguish them, it was in an instant that each were raised, but there was some space of time between them. What is there to hinder it? There is no expression in the word of God which binds all to rise at the same instant. Those that do rise at the same time rise, no doubt, in a moment; but that there are to be various acts of resurrection is not only not contrary to scripture, but required by its own descriptions. This verse declares it, and there is no other interpretation that can stand even a moment's fair discussion.

W. K.

Revised New Testament, Revised New Testament: Revelation 21:1-8

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

It is well that in the Revised Version the first eight verses form a separate section. Nowhere in the book is such a division more imperatively called for, though probably even the Revisers themselves do not all appreciate the importance of their own arrangement, which tends to guard the reader from confounding the eternal state with the millennial to the loss of their marked distinctiveness. For as chapter 20 gave us the thousand years, during which on the one hand Satan seduces no more and on the other the risen saints reign with Christ, as the power and pride of man were put down at the beginning, so the last uprising of the nations when Satan is loosed at the end will come to naught, and heaven and earth depart, and God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ the Lord. After this judgment of the dead a new heaven and a new earth are seen, for the first were gone away, and the sea, it is said, exists no more: a most weighty contrast with the world that now is, and also with the world as it is to be during the thousand years. Vegetable and animal life could not be without the sea, unless by a perpetual miracle which would be absurd. The sea is the greatest of separating barriers for the nations, as it represents the restless masses of mankind not subject to regular government. Then heaven and earth is in everlasting order and harmony, all the wicked being consigned to the lake of fire, and God all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). Hence in these verses we have neither nations nor kings any longer; whereas we have both, and a state of things, however new and blessed, suited to both, in the section that begins with verse 9 down to 22:5. But this is really retrogressive; when the Lamb is put forward prominently, and the governmental relation of the Bride, the Lamb's wife (the holy and heavenly city having the glory of God), to the nations—and kings of the earth. In short, as we may see more when we come to the later section, it is as clearly millennial, as the previous short section now before us is post-millennial, when provisional dealings have no more place, and all is fixed forever. Hence there is an absoluteness of blessing in 3, 4, and a universal extent, strikingly distinct from the beautiful picture of the favored complement out of all nations on the earth looking to the reign of Christ in chap. 7:15-17. Here it is a question of "men," and God Himself with them, tabernacling with them (not merely spreading His tabernacle over them), and they His people (or peoples) and He with them, their God. Nor is it only every tear wiped by Him from their eyes, but death no more and mourning and crying and pain no more, the first things being gone away and all things made new, which is but relatively true of the millennium. So all the wicked are seen to have their part in the lake of fire, which cannot be till the thousand years are over. The distinctive traits point therefore unmistakably here, not in the vision that follows, to the eternal state, of which Scripture says little, but that little full of pregnant instruction.

In 1 ἀπὸ θου (or- αυ) is right, not παρῆλθε as in the Compl. edition as well as the Received Text following Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae and a few other cursives. The true reading is more energetic. The last clause is singularly tampered with in the Alexandrian uncials, "I saw the sea no more," which is quite short of the truth conveyed. So Dusterdieck is all wrong in talking about a new sea, for the text clearly distinguishes "the sea" from what is said of the first heaven and the first earth. In 2 is one of those unseemly additions for which Erasmus appears to be responsible, following no known Greek copy but the Clementine edition and inferior manuscripts of the Vulgate. For the more ancient Latin copies (Amos Demid. Fuld. Tol. &c.) reject "I John" with à ABP, more than forty cursives, and all or nearly all the ancient versions. And so also for putting καινην at the end, not the beginning, of the phrase, which would perhaps admit of the marginal rendering of the Revised Version, though the text seems to me correct as in the Authorized Version. "Out of heaven from God" is the true order, though P 1.49. 79. and other cursives support the Received Text and the Authorized Version. It was not earthly, but "out of heaven;" it was not of human source, but divine, "from God;" and, what is noticeable (though the marriage was recorded not here but in chap. xix. more than a thousand years before), "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." In 3, consequent on the descent of the holy city, a great voice is heard out of the "heaven" (or "throne"). It is hard to decide, and ought not to be closed up, as in the Revised Version, without even a marginal note, that some ancient authorities support the former, B P, almost all the cursives, and the ancient versions (save the Vulgate and margin of the Armenian as) against 14t A 18. and the exceptions just stated. "The tabernacle of God [is] with men," His presence in the church now glorified and come down for the eternal state; and thus God will tabernacle (not "over" but) "with" them. On general principles we can say that men are changed thus to have dwelling with them. "Peoples" is the reading of à A 1.79.92. and perhaps others; but the mass, with B P and the old versions, supports, as in the Complutensian edition, the singular, which Tischendorf thinks more probably an emendation. It appears to me that αὐτοί might rather influence a scribe in favor of the plural and thus bring in the various reading. Tischendorf also omits with à B, more than thirty cursives and several ancient versions, &c., θεός αὐτῶν or αὐτ. θ. and so the Complutensian edition, Tregelles, Westcott, and Hort. In 4 the Received Text, with A. 1. &c., adds "God," but authority in general omits, as well as ἀπ' αὐτῶν in B and some fifteen cursives. Before θάν. à and a few cursives &c. read no article, the effect of which would be to say "there shall be no death more," not "death shall be no more," as with the article in A B P and most. It is strange that ὅτι should be left out of the last clause, and that Tregelles should cite ἀρ.μ. as omitting it, for there it is, but not the previous ἔτι, by an obvious slip, with the strange blunder of πρόβατα for πρῶτα. Even Afford and Tregelles bracket ὅτι, and Tischendorf accepts, as Lachmann, and Westcott and Hort reject it. But this is a narrow line for the Revised Version without a note to the reader that the mass of authority is opposed to A P, and some old Latin copies, though Amos and Fuld. may be doubted. In 5 ἐπὶ τῷ θ. is right and best supported against τοῦ θ. as in the Received Text. The dative best expresses proper and permanent relationship. The variety is great as to κ. π. πάντα, as it should be. "To me" is questionable; though à P, most cursives and versions sustain it. "Faithful and true" is best supported. In 6 discrepancy again abounds. "It is" (as in the Received Text), or "they are" (A &c.), "done"; or "I am become," as in à B P, &c. Yet the best supported reading which the Complutensian edition adopted is intrinsically the worst. The first seems to be only formed by Erasmus according to the Vulgate. The second appears to be right. The omission of εἶμι or insertion of αὐτῷ is scarce felt in translation. In 7 "these" (not "all") things hardly can be questioned: so good is the authority. It is rather God's everlasting glory in Christ than the special glory of reigning with Christ, the Heir of all things, the final unchanging blessedness of the redeemed, each overcomer having God his God, and he His son, where the article is quite wrong. In 8 the Received Text fails to give the article, though in Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae Erasmus ought to have seen it written above in red. The better authorities (à A P, some cursives, and old versions, &c.) support Erasmus and the Received Text (as against the Complutensian edition, Griesbach, Scholz, with B, very many cursives, and other ancient versions, &c.) in omitting καὶ ἁματωλοῖς, "and sinners." The emphatic form is right in the last clause, where Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae misled Erasmus, &c., and P has only "death." No; it is exactly not death merely because of sin as in Eden at the beginning, nor destructive judgments on the earth as in the past or the future; but now at the end "the second death," because of grace and truth fully come yet rejected, despised, or corrupted. God is not mocked. If life in Christ be refused, all ends in endless separation and wrath from God; their part is in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner, Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner: Part 1

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

There is a great deal more, in this verse than most are apt to find, even though they may be dear, and even intelligent, children of God. Yet it is also remarkable that, although the depth is uncommon in presenting the brightest hope of the church, as well as encouraging the simplest individual believer, there is likewise the most ample expression of sovereign grace to the neediest of sinners, in whatever state he may be found. What can be more open than saying, “He that will, let him take the water of life freely?” There is no more unrestricted invitation to perishing souls in any part of the Bible. Yet what grace shone when the Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria and announced — what man’s hard heart is so slow to believe — the Father’s love in seeking worshippers to worship Him. And the Son was there to manifest that He did not disdain, but even sought, that poor woman without a character. Some may have thought she avoided going at the hour when other women went to the well. If she had obvious reason for shunning them, they had not a kind word to say about her. But Christ made God known in love, even to one so wretched through sin. Yet He who thus loves is holy, whereas those who despised her were not.

Those who set up and cultivate sanctimonious expression of speech and ways have rarely any real sense of sin in themselves, any more than of grace in God. They make a fair show in the flesh, and have never learned their own ruin as sinners. They desire to feel and appear holy, and fear to find out and own what they really are in God’s sight. But is it not always the greatest weakness to wish to appear anything? The believer has no reason to hide when he is assured of the grace that forgives all his sins. If God justifies him, who is he that condemns? He can afford to appear what he really is. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from every sin.” “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God,” says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, who had been amongst the most dissolute of mankind. Greece as a country was full of immorality; and there was no city in all that land so proverbially bad as Corinth. Yet the Lord, to encourage His servant in the face of opposing and blaspheming Jews, said, “Be not afraid but speak, and hold not thy peace... for I have much people in this city.” It required a word by a vision at night from the Lord to the apostle to keep up his courage in continuing in a place so full of corruption as Corinth.

Ever bear in mind that in the gospel it is what the Lord brings to us, and not what we offer to Him, when received in faith, which is the turning-point and the substance of the soul’s salvation. God has, and freely, given a perfect Savior in Christ for the lost. Does any one of you doubt that His heart is so ready to forgive, even you, notwithstanding your sins which are many and great? You do Him a heinous wrong in doubting His Word and His love. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not only can He afford to save you on believing, but He gives all with the freeness and fullness that becomes the God of all grace. “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all: how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

The figure employed, in the Revelation, is “the water of life;” as the Lord spoke of giving “the living water” in John 4:10. The two books, the Gospel and the Revelation, are as different in character as can be; but who does not see how thoroughly the words tally, and how one Spirit reigns throughout Scripture? The book of Revelation is as full of judgment, as the Gospel of John teems with grace; but it is the same Lord Jesus Christ, whatever the distinctness of design may require in each case. The prophetic visions vindicate His rights over all the universe, and therefore over all nations as well as Israel. Before they begin in Revelation 6 we are given to see the bright result of grace in the glorified saints gathered on high around the throne, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders in Revelation 4 and 5. But the book could not close without the words read in the text, which put the church and the believer in their present place of hope, and which continue to invite the sinner, whatever his state, to receive His grace as freely as ever. First of all, we hear “the Spirit and the bride” saying to Christ, “Come.” For He loved the church and gave Himself for her; and she knows from His own lips that He is coming to receive her to Himself. Therefore we can understand how proper are the words, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” To whom does the Spirit animate the bride thus to speak? To the Bridegroom. It is indeed much to be noticed, and full of instruction.

Earlier in the book (Rev. 3:11) the Lord says “I come quickly”; but the Spirit and the bride do not add “quickly” now — they join in crying to Christ, “Come.” Those who compose the bride had already each submitted to the righteousness of God; they knew for their own souls that they were saved by grace through faith; and they were waiting in assured hope of Him to bring them into the Father’s house, where He Himself now is, and whence He had promised to come and fetch them there. Remark then how important and how suited are the words, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Men, and even saints, are all liable to mistakes. Who, that knows himself or others, could rest his hope on the creature in its best estate? As we need Christ’s work for saving us, so we cannot do without God’s Word for any appearance of solid worth, whether for faith or hope, for walk or worship. Therefore does the Spirit — that is, the Holy Spirit — prompt the word. He and the bride are represented as saying, “Come.” Can anything be more comely or in character?

The Spirit of God has His place as directing and strengthening the heart of the church, the bride. He dwells in the believer as well as in the church. As this privilege never was enjoyed before redemption, so it never will be given in the same power and way again. Ample blessing awaits Israel and the nations by and by. The Spirit will be poured out again when the Lord reigns. It will be “the regeneration” for the earth, as the prophets predict, in the millennial day. But Scripture indicates again remarkable differences as compared with His presence now. And no intelligent soul can be surprised; for on the bright day that approaches for the world, there will be sight; and no such tests of faith as there are now. Everything will be joyous, peaceful, and prosperous in righteousness. Satan will be shut out from tempting and seducing; and Jehovah shall reign over all the earth without a rival or a rebel, His name one. But now the present is the evil age from which grace has delivered the Christian who has to make his way by faith and suffering for his Master’s sake.

We ought to be like the fish swimming against the stream as living fish do: the dead ones are carried along with it. The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ever works in the sons of disobedience is still directing the many evil currents of the world; but every one is dead against the Lord Jesus, as Scripture warns us. Constantine did not alter that; and the Papacy only added another evil. There cannot be a better proof of the world’s enmity to God than that it all, civil and religious, cast out and crucified His Son. For who were those who did the deed? Not Hottentots or Tartars, or Chinese. The Roman power of that day was misled by His own ancient people, the Jews. Herod was content with mockery. Even the ruthless Pilate wanted to let the Lord off, because he knew it was for envy, He was victimized; and by whose envy? The priests’, the High Priest’s — the very men set up of God to intercede for others. How evidently they were fallen under the power of

Satan, and were interceding for his will and victory when they crucified the Son of God! Such was the real character of their persistent outcry. And so it is that the world treats His name and truth. It may go on in apparent quiet for a time; but what brings its enmity to a head? Christ. As then, so ever and so now, it is Christ that Satan always opposes, drawing in his train the enmity of the world.

The judge of quick and dead is a reality they cannot stand. And so they gnash, not perhaps with their teeth, but in their hearts. They accordingly cannot, as they are now, but hate those identified with His truth, as they will hate you if you are faithful, but not if you compromise. Compromising is an insidious and especial danger for a Christian. The new nature he has in Christ makes him abhor sin, and just because he is born of God, he turns away from it and prays to God His Father to be delivered from all evil by virtue of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. The Holy Spirit was sent from heaven in manifested power after our Lord died, rose, and ascended. It is well to remember the words in John 7:39, "The Holy Ghost was not yet [given] because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Is this the doctrine you usually hear? Alas! very commonly it is not, and this among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Let me speak of one no longer alive, an eloquent and celebrated preacher, a pious and prayerful man (a former dean of Ripon), who wrote a book to prove that the Holy Spirit's presence and action did not differ at Pentecost from what it was before. But this idea contradicted flatly the words cited and the truth generally in the New Testament. For the gospels all look forward to that great gift as an immense and new privilege. When Jesus took His seat on high, the Holy Spirit came personally, and came to abide forever. This had never been before, and never will be again in the same peculiar way. For the kingdom by-and-by there will be a larger work. The Spirit will be poured on all flesh; so that the extent will be far greater. "My people (Israel) shall be all righteous" in that day; and vast too will be the blessing among all the nations of the earth. How striking and how general the work of divine grace when the idols shall utterly pass away, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day!

But what the Holy Spirit occupies Himself with now is a most special work of concentration, rather than of world-wide action, though the testimony of the gospel is preached to every creature. And why? Because He is gathering souls in spiritual power round the true center, the Lord Jesus. And this survives all man's failure and defection. "For where two or three are gathered together to My name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ's name was the center at Pentecost when the church began; and so it is still. When the Spirit is poured out at the coming of the Lord's world-kingdom. He will adapt Himself to the work in hand. He will, for instance, enable God's people to walk according to God's laws under the new and divine government of the earth. For Israel it will be the new covenant, and a Messiah reigning in open power; and the Spirit will strengthen in that way. But what an enormous difference there will be when the Lord visibly governs, reigning as a king in righteousness, with princes that rule in judgment, and the vile shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful! How will not the presence of the Lord as a priest on His throne make everything to be in holy order and peaceful happiness in that day!

So He says, in the verse before the one read, "I [Jesus] am the root and the offspring of David." He will then assuredly accomplish all the old and glorious predictions for the earth. He will bless Israel to the full, and, after Israel, all the nations in general. Israel behaved shamelessly, and the other nations (previously rebellious) found no deliverance, no help, in a people that sinned along with them. In due time the gospel came in and lifted the believer above nationality, whether Jewish or Gentile. The gospel has for its aim to save the believer, and unite him to Christ in and for heavenly glory. Thus is the church formed by the present Holy Spirit. It is the richest expression of divine grace. Those who believe are called to be, and even now are, God's children, as they also are by one Spirit baptized into one body.

Do you ask, What of ourselves and our sins? I ask in reply, For what did Christ die? Did not His death effect for the believer what God intended? Was He not offered for the remission of sins? Does He not blot them out before God for each believer, as in the type of the scape-goat (only a great deal better) they were borne away to a solitary land, where nobody would hear of them more? Remember there were two goats. There was one goat for Jehovah, and the other was for dismissal into the wilderness. The first was sacrificed for a sin-offering. The essential thing where sin is in question is, first of all, to vindicate God. If we are to have His grace, He must have His rights in order that His grace may flow without a jar or an obstacle. The first goat was therefore offered as a sin-offering to Jehovah. The second goat could have no efficacy save in virtue of the first; but after that offering, how invaluable its testimony that "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins" were sent away expressly to a land of forgetfulness! Such was the solemn type on the day of atonement (Lev. 16). And the Lord Jesus more than made it good, as all can find who receive Hebrews 9-10 from God. On His work are founded the blessed words, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Do we, my friends, for ourselves believe these words? How few comparatively in this land of religious profession really believe? How many flatter themselves that they do, while manifestly unconverted? If you believe God's testimony to you as a guilty person, it would mark that His grace has awakened your soul. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Have you bowed in faith to the truth and the grace so plain in the gospel? Do you not see that God could afford to justify you righteously through Christ's blood, and in no other way? Till our Lord died, not a single sin was taken away; when He died and rose, a work was accepted by God which would leave not a single sin on any believer. But even God's children for the most part are only half-believers. They have generally slipped back to the condition of Jews before the Lord came. They think the efficacy is lost every time they break down, and that they must begin over again.

How sad to be in a measure always learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. The Jew, under law, could not avoid this constant need of renewal; but what are Christians about, who so forget the gospel? It is unbelief of what grace now gives through Christ Jesus. What can more evidently weaken and darken the glad tidings God sends us? All spring is gone for a holy walk; and you cannot worship in the Spirit unless you know that all is clear between Him and you. Far am I from saying that you are to gloss over any failure. Confess all fully, and at once; but go to Him with the certainty that He welcomes you to His presence which you must have slighted when you sinned. But are you not in living relationship with Him, and with the Lord Jesus, His Son? You have dishonored Him; but if He denies not your relationship, you should not, who need it more than ever for the restoration of your soul. Perhaps you may have said, or done something wrong this morning. But is there no appointed remedy, no adequate way, of getting practically clear? Certainly there is. Retire into your closet, shut the door, and have it out with God. It is not that He revokes His grace, and that you are back in the world, but that having partaken of His grace in the gospel, you should humble yourself deeply for any sins into which carelessness has let you slip.

Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner, Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner: Part 2

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

The apostle told the Corinthians that, "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." They then had not judged themselves, and the Lord was chastening them. How did He then deal with the Corinthians? "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and not a few sleep." This did not prove they were unbelievers, but rather the contrary. It was just because they bore His name that the Lord chastised them. He does not execute condemnation on the world yet: it will be judgment in strict unsparing righteousness. There will be no mercy (which men despised) mingling with the just award (which they did not fear). Now there is grace without judgment. Why? Because Christ undertook the judgment and bore it on the cross. Nothing is more righteous, if He undertook it; nothing more gracious, nothing simpler than the gospel; while nothing is deeper, nothing surer, and nothing more blessed. Therein God gives complete rest for your conscience in what Christ has suffered for you, and in His love perfect rest for your heart. You are then free to have Christ Himself to enjoy.

What can compare with the privileges of the Christian? It is not merely hearing sermons, were they master-pieces, nor is it prayer individual or common, although you are sure to fall into sins if careless as to prayer and the Word of God too. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" It is through the washing of water by His Word. It admonishes and warns, corrects and rebukes, feeds and directs, revives and encourages us; yet how seldom one hears ordinarily about this cleansing by the Word. All who believe do speak of Christ's blood; its need is too absolute for such to forget it. But children of God for lack of honoring the Word must seem to be lingering about the door, as if they were not free to cross the threshold of forgiveness. There they are and there they stick; which tends at length to the forgetfulness of the purging from their old sins. It is the more sorrowful because we all are called to go forward in enjoying Christ, and to be filled with thanksgiving and praise.

Therefore, my dear friends, I cannot but press this upon your earnest heed, so that you who believe may be enabled to take in faith your due place. Never mind what man thinks; hearken to what the Lord says. Men count it strange if you go back to the standard of the only, the best, way. It looks eccentric when compared with modern thought or practice ever so old since apostolic days. But your wisdom is never to let such talk deprive you of the blessing of walking obediently in the truth. "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in Him." Delivered from a bad conscience and guilty fears, see that you move onward, dependent and confiding. Be assured of His grace whether you fall asleep, or live till He comes, when He will receive us all together to Himself and for the Father's house. Unless you know yourselves purged by His blood, and yourselves the objects of His love, how is it possible to be in a fit condition to worship the Father and the Son? You may fairly be described as no more than lying on the threshold, instead of entering into the joys of God's habitation in the Spirit; for He surely has pleasure in the happiness of His children. As things are, how many Christians are but borderers, whereas Christ suffered for our sins, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and has given us the Spirit that we might enjoy the presence of God fully even now and here.

Is not this condition sanctioned in the New Testament? What did the apostle mean in desiring that the Colossians should be thanking "the Father, who made us meet to be partaken of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Are you thus thanking Him now? You, if a believer, have eternal life, your sins are forgiven, and yourself are a child of God, with the Spirit of His Son enabling your heart to cry, Abba, Father. To be a "door-keeper" now is falling short of what God bestows on you. Christ not only meets us where we were, but brings us even now in faith where He is — into the holiest. The salvation God gives, not to some, but to all that believe, is worthy of Himself and His Son. He leaves not a single spot or stain upon us; and we are thenceforward called in the strength of the heavenly meat of Christ to enjoy God's love unstinted and perfect. Christ's work may well banish every doubt on that score.

But what does He mean by saying, "I am the root and the offspring of David"? To be David's offspring not even an unbelieving Jew could deny to the Christ. But how could He be David's root when He was born more than a thousand years after David? Yet He says so, which is enough; as the Old Testament scriptures said the same, centuries before. Yes, He was David's root just as surely as, if more wonderingly than, He was David's offspring — the Son of David as well as David's Lord. (Compare Psa. 110 and Matt. 22:45.) In one person now is He both God and man, as He loved to call Himself the Son of Man, yet of David's lineage, and thus, inheriting Solomon's title. If He had been only of His mother, this, though absolutely needed, would not have been sufficient. For, as is known, she was, through her father Heli, descended from Nathan, who had not the promise of the kingdom. It must be through Solomon's line. Here, therefore, Joseph furnished the missing link, being not only of David but through Solomon.

Hence, plainly as in Luke 3 we have His mother's line, so in Matthew 1 we have Joseph's title, and how it became His indisputably, on Jewish principles. Both met in Himself the Messiah, "Who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen." He was thus, and only thus, by any possibility, David's root as well as offspring. And yet if he had been Joseph's son in His humanity, as He was Mary's, all would have been sin and falsehood. For He could not then have been God's Son, His Only-begotten; He could not have been God, as truly as the Father is. But Joseph's son, He was legally alone, because Joseph was affianced to the Virgin Mary, though they never lived together till the wondrous Babe of Bethlehem was born, as Scripture carefully states, and the prophet Isaiah had no less carefully foreshown.

Truly we may exclaim

Yet, with an incomparably higher claim, He never had a kingdom here below from God, like David, or Solomon. He came to suffer for sins to God's glory, and thus lay the basis of redemption, not only for sinners and the church now, but for the kingdom by and by, and for all things, God being thus infinitely glorified. Oh, what a wonderful combination of glory, divine and human, past and present future and everlasting! He died, not for that nation only, the poor Jewish people which had Him put to death on the cross. Yet He died for them. He prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." On that very ground they had the gospel preached, and many believed; on that very ground they will have forgiveness in the age to come.

And why are not you forgiven to day? The word of this salvation is sent to you that you may believe it now. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." Put not the word of reconciliation from you, but receive it into your souls. Believe that God made Him that knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

But my task is to show that there is another and very distinct character in which the Lord next presents Himself. He will verify and make good all that David's root and offspring can impart in His coming kingdom. Yet He is also the "bright, the morning star." This is never said in the

Old Testament about the Lord Jesus. The only morning star we hear of there is His enemy foreshadowed by the haughty king of Babylon in Isaiah 14, the last holder of the imperial power which began in "the golden city." "Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit." It is because of his great words at the close that he will be given to the burning of fire. This appears to be the true identification of the "day-star, son of the morning," in the prophetic word of Isaiah. It is not Satan, as many have hastily thought. He is described as a great king, this king of Babylon.

Thus the first king of Babylon is a type of the last who succeeds to the world-power which began then. It is not Nebuchadnezzar whose last appearance in scripture (Dan. 4) is as different as possible, both in humiliation and restoration. Nor did any other fully meet the terms of the prophet; but it surely will be in the little horn of the West (Dan. 7). He is the final holder of this world's imperial power. Such is the man whom Old Testament prophecy describes as the "son of the morning, or the day-star" (Lucifer).

But the Lord for whom we wait now, the hope of the church and of the Christian, reveals Himself accordingly as "the bright, the morning star." Nor is it the first time. For, in an earlier part of this very book of Revelation, it is said of Him, "I will give him (the overcomer) the morning star." Here too the Lord distinguishes it from giving him power over the nations; just as we have His own title as "the root and the offspring of David" distinguished from His being "the bright, the morning star." Authority or power over the nations will be when the Lord takes the kingdom of the world, rising as the Sun of righteousness. But when He adds "and I will give Him the morning star," it is association with Himself when He receives His own to Himself before that day of outward universal power shall dawn. He thus promises to the overcomer something more, and higher, and more intimate than that. He is going to give us Himself in heavenly blessedness and in love truly divine before that day.

Such will be the morning star. This lovely harbinger is before the day breaks. The sun is not yet risen to dispel the darkness of the night. The morning star, oh how it cheers those who watch while others sleep; and to watch now is what Christians are called to — to wait for Christ, sure that He is coming for His own, not knowing when He comes. This is the precious object for our hearts as we pursue the pilgrim path. It is the hope given us by Himself (John 14). If day by day we make it by the Spirit a living reality, what a power of raising our souls from toil and moil, from snares and troubles, to that which is before Himself! For He particularly awaits that moment. Impossible to be peacefully directed thus in heart, and to be also absorbed with earthly expectations, and clouded with worldly cares.

Whatever be the duty of the Christian, he is bound to do it thoroughly and with thanksgiving to the Lord. But he is not troubled if others run before him as they like; and whatever the trial, he can trust the Lord unqualifiedly. Where "the bright, the morning star" fills the heart, as its outlook, what comparable is anything you can win by labors night and day? The Gentiles seek after meat and drink and clothing; and the world holds out as prizes, gold and silver and precious things; but what are these compared with "the bright, the morning star"? To behold Christ at His coming to share with us His heavenly glory to be in a moment, and forever, associated with Him, before His judgments fall on the nations! Yet, in substance, it is the same hope He gave His own whilst He was here — the hope of His coming again to place us where He is in His Father's house. It is a quite different thing from His earthly glory as the root and offspring of David, when He reigns by and by. He is in His Father's house, whither He went to prepare a place for us. He is coming to give him that overcometh the Morning Star.

Is this then your hope, my brethren? Or are you only occupied with the Jews and their movement toward the land? Many are expecting the world to get better by education and temperance, by art, letters, and science. But all such expectations are vain. Others with better feeling trust to the preaching of the gospel as the panacea in the hand of the Spirit. Have they forgotten that Pentecost has been fulfilled without any such effect on the nations of the earth? Did the world improve when the twelve apostles labored here below, and the Apostle Paul beyond them all? Can you imagine that the present generation of Christian preachers or any one else approaches within a measurable degree those whom God set "first in the church?" He who could tolerate a thought of comparison with them could only be a person as ignorant of himself as of them. Yet were they men filled with an abiding sense of their own insufficiency and with a like spirit of dependence on the Lord. They accepted, and held unflinchingly to, the path of pilgrims and strangers, as it was Christ's path. Yet even in their own time, though lingering at first in Jerusalem, they went forth and preached the gospel everywhere,

Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner, Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner: Part 3

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Scripture describes the present in one aspect as "night." Well might it be so I since our Lord was crucified. It is the night of man's day. But the light of God's glory in Christ has shone into our hearts, once utterly dark; and we can look up into the heavens, and by faith behold the One who is coming. And this hope brightens the heart before He comes, and makes us long for Him. The first object of the Christian's heart is Christ. This only the better fits us to seek the perishing, that they may be saved; as we have a yet nearer call of love toward brethren in Christ. But the first and deepest affection is and ought to be toward Christ. Our constant and due attitude is to be patiently waiting for Him, that is, for "the bright, the morning star."

Now, let me ask, Is it so with you that believe? What is the use of any truth if you do not make it your own, and live in it? It will otherwise only condemn you. Who can be said to set a just regard on God's truth if he does not earnestly act on it? We owe all to His love; and in fact it was His love that sent Christ to die and bring us salvation. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). So also just before, we were yet without strength, when "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This is God's gospel; and the proper hope of him that has received the gospel is Christ coming for us, when also we shall reign with Him. The Old Testament saints shall also share His reign; they suffered in faith. But none had the Bright, the Morning Star revealed, as Christ does it now. Hence see the force of "The Spirit, and the bride say, Come." For the Holy Spirit is in us now, and leads the church to say, Come; as he that hears, the individual believer, is invited to bid Christ come. But how could anyone ask the Lord to come, the Judge of quick and dead, unless he were justified by faith and had peace with God?

Beware of the too common view which mixes up the coming of the Lord for the saints, with His appearing to judge the world. Shall I tell you what such a theory is like? It actually makes the Lord, when He comes to receive His bride,, array Himself as it were with the black cap of the Judge. To him who knows the symmetry of God's Word there can scarce be a sadder perversion of the truth. The Lord coming with a black cap to meet His bride! Oh, what folly man can conceive when he slips from Scripture into his own thoughts!

There are two parts in Christ's coming. First, He will receive His saints and take them to heaven. There is the great importance of the fourth chapter of the Revelation. None can find the church on earth after Revelation 3; for the conclusory word in Revelation 22 goes back of course, and is no exception to the fact named. The second and third chapters of the Revelation show the churches in seven different types, which furnish a somewhat prophetic view of what it seemed good to the Lord to notice therein until He comes. Revelation 4 lets us see all the saints glorified in heaven. How did they get there? The Lord had translated them. It does not belong to the purpose of the Revelation to give a vision of the Lord's coming to receive them to Himself. The vision we have in Revelation 19 is of the Lord coming from heaven with the saints following Him when He executes judgment.

Confessedly, the only way (and how happily!) believers can be caught up to heaven is by Christ's presenting them there at His coming. The fullest revelation of it, is in 1 Thessalonians 4, in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and in 1 Corinthians 15. In these three scriptures, which, ought to more than suffice, we have the proof that, in this way only are the saints to be taken in a moment together out of the world; as they will at a later season leave heaven — at the time of His appearing to execute judgment. There is thus not the least mixing of the Bridegroom's coming for the bride, and of the Judge's execution of judgment on the world. This enforcing of judgment might suit such a cap of condemnation (at least in human style). But think of so grotesque an array for one meeting and marrying a bride, even though he were a judge! Yet this reflects symbolically what such a system of confusion makes of our Lord's coming. It is as contrary to Scripture as to the nature of things. Distinguish the two parts, and you have, Christ coming for His saints, and in due course His other act of coming with them to judge the world.

The distinction preserves the hope in its constant power. We may always wait if there be no revealed events to intervene. Such is the unquestionable impression formed by the gospels and the epistles, and confirmed, not impaired, by the Revelation rightly understood. Still more profuse again are the references to His appearing to judge the world, before which important events must necessarily be fulfilled. Then in the Revelation we have the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials, to say nothing of signs and solemn facts which the Lord and the apostle declare must be before that day. But the coming for His own is carefully apart, that it may be a simple hope, and not an event of providence or of prophecy. They are both true, but distinct, parts of His Second Advent.

Hence the moment the bride hears of Him as the Bright, the Morning Star, she answers, "Come." She knows of no revealed delay; she asks for no tokens; she thinks of no preparation further in this world. The church alone (and so the Christian individually) has the Spirit thus guiding in perfect peace and confiding affection before the Lord comes. Whatever outpouring of the Spirit the Jews receive is after He appears. It is therefore eminently characteristic of the bride, the church, that the Spirit is shown here leading her to say, Come. It is not a mere expression of her own feeling (which might be enthusiasm), but a Spirit-given and sanctioned call to Christ, as the fruit in her of His grace and truth. And what has ever wrought in saints effects more acceptable to God than the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ? The bride is, without doubt, the church, longing for Christ to come, and rightly interpreting by the Spirit His way of revealing Himself.

It is not at all doubted that Jerusalem will be in a similar relation comparatively on the earth.

Jerusalem is the bride referred to in the Song of Solomon as well as Psalm 45 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. There the associations are all earthly. Of course it is a figure in either case, meaning the one dearest to the Lord respectively in heaven or earth. There is no real difficulty; only we must not confuse the two. When we have as here, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come," the words can apply only to the church waiting for Christ. But the words that follow are of much moment, and serve to guard us from over-valuing knowledge in comparison with the possession of Christ by faith.

I have seen people rather proud of their knowledge, which then bred worms and stank; but grace never despises those who may not know as much as others. We ought to love dearly Christ's own who know but little — to cherish them all the more because they are short. Do you not see this in the mother who has a child not so pretty or bright as the rest? She tries to make up for its defect by the most marked affection. She knows that the beauties of the family can get on very well for themselves. Most people like a handsome boy or girl; but the plain one is apt to fare ill with strangers. Not so with the mother, who cleaves to it, so that sometimes even the poor little soul is in danger of getting a little conceited or selfish, because so much love is showered upon it. But without question grace would lead one to care especially for the feebler among God's children, Those who are strong do not well to overlook the weak and please themselves. It is according to Christ that we help the needy in this way, and take pains to lead them on.

Here we have a special addition that illustrates His grace in a practical shape. "And let him that heareth say, Come." There are not a few who have never understood, never enjoyed, the pledged relationship of the bride. Are they then to be silent? Are they forbidden to welcome Christ's coming? Not so. If one has really heard the voice of Christ, without appreciating the bridal place, let him not hesitate. He believes in Christ and His work, he knows His love already, and that He is coming to consummate His love; for He will change the body of our humiliation, so as to be conformed to the body of His glory, and have us thus like Himself, and with Him where, He is.

Here the Word warrants the weakest one "that heareth" to say, Come. This is grace indeed, as it disproves the theorists who slight the deficient in knowledge. They are more to be blamed than those they look down on. "Let him that heareth say, Come," is an encouraging word to the feeble believer.

But this is not all. Having now set in their place those who answer with bridal love, and such as hear Christ but know not that relationship, the revealing Spirit is careful even here to insist on seal for the gospel, and warm interest in souls who are strangers to Christ and in danger of perishing. There are those of the world or such as look like the world, as the publican did to the Pharisee in the temple. For the publican, not the Pharisee, bitterly bewailed his condition and cast himself on God's sovereign mercy. Far different he who despised and hated him with a bard and haughty bearing, most hateful to God. But the Lord entered into the publican's need; and just because he did not justify himself, he is declared to have gone down to his house justified rather than the other. Some such state seems described in the next words of our text, "Let him that is athirst come." It is an address to one who is no longer indifferent, but thirsting for what would relieve his soul. He could

scarcely be athirst if unawakened to feel it; but a sense of want, a craving for the blessing he does not yet know, there is. And here is the invitation of grace — “Let him that is athirst come.” He is not told to say, Come, as in both the former cases. How could a man in his misery ask the Lord to come? He is just realizing his wants and his ruin; and the question for him was how to assuage his burning thirst. “Let him come.” For the water of life is here to be taken freely. Nothing but life’s water can refresh the thirsty soul. Let him come and drink then without money and without price.

The Spirit goes further still and addresses any one willing to hear. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Impossible to meet souls more widely than this. Here truly as it were the extreme verge of gospel grace is reached. It not merely meets the soul that condemns itself and loathes its sins, but stretches out to meet such as still seem careless if peradventure the conscience may be reached. What goodness in God thus yearning after the evil and impenitent that the very invitation may act divinely on their souls! “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Oh hear the message of love from God tonight if you never hearkened to Him before. He is willing to save you on your receiving freely. Are you unwilling even to be saved? Tremble to think of Him and of yourself. The bride, as the Christian, does not say, “Come to Me.” This is what a certain corrupt woman says, who sits upon the seven hills of Babylon, a false prophetess. Her cry is, “Come to me; there is no salvation outside me; I am infallible.” Never does the bride so speak; only the great harlot. The water of life she has indeed drunk; but she is not the giver of it, and she is jealous for Christ’s glory. From Him, not her, the water of life flows, and whosoever will, let him take that water freely. Christ is the spring, the fountain; and there is none other. May God bless His own Word.

Courtesy of BibleTruthPublishers.com. Most likely this text has not been proofread. Any suggestions for spelling or punctuation corrections would be warmly received. Please email them to: BTPmail@bibletruthpublishers.com.

Revised New Testament, Revised New Testament: Revelation 22:1-5

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In 1 “pure” is rightly expunged as an expletive added by several cursives and other authorities, and, as adopted by Erasmus from the Reuchlin copy, current in the received text, but not in the great uncials, à A B P (C being here as often defective) as well as in some thirty juniors and most of the old versions. The first clause of 2 is connected singularly by the Revisers with verse 1: “out of the throne of (bid and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof.” Of course it is possible grammatically; and, if allowed, it would strengthen De Wette’s severance of τοῦ ποταμοῦ; from ἐν. and connection of it only with ἐντ. καὶ ἐντ. But it seems a strange and poor conclusion to the grand picture of the river of life proceeding out of the throne. That no version is known to us generally as favorable to such a construction is serious, when one considers the responsibility of a Revision intended for ordinary use, and not merely what an individual or two might suggest to students. Is it not going beyond the limits of what is fair, especially if it were the impression of a few men confident in their own judgment and ready in overthrowing the pleas of others?

Let me suggest the spiritual propriety as in my opinion confirming here the rendering hitherto and everywhere approved. The beautiful truth is laid down in the opening verse that at the epoch intended the throne is now styled the throne of God and the Lamb. It was not so before He came to reign; it will not be so when He delivers up the kingdom to God even the Father, when God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) shall be all in all. And out of what is now first called the throne of God and the Lamb proceeds a river of life bright as crystal, the full unhindered power of enjoying that life eternal which the believer has here in utter weakness and with manifold hindrances. Such is its source, character, and time. Then follows in verse 3 the weighty and interesting communication, that in the midst of the street or Broadway of the heavenly city and of the river, on this side and on that, was the tree of life according to the promise of Christ in Rev. 2:7. The paradise of God coalesces with the new Jerusalem. Life’s tree producing twelve fruits, each month yielding its fruit, not merely on either side of the river, but in the midst of the street, points to the accessibility as well as full and varied supply of bounteous refreshment—this spiritually for the favored on high. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, here again pointing to the administration of the fullness of the seasons, when God will in Christ sum up all things, or put them all under His headship, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth—in Him in whom also we obtained inheritance. For the characteristic of that day will not be either the earth alone, or the heavens alone, but both, the scene of blessing and glory, and this in suited measure of character: the heavens supremely and absolutely, evil thence expelled forever and never more to recur; the earth filled with glory in a form and measure adapted to a scene where not curse but blessing reigns in righteousness, even if a final uprising of the nations be in store at the end, when Satan is let loose once more to seduce, before the white throne judgment of the wicked raised for their everlasting doom. But under the reign of Christ the coexistence is plain of the heavens and the earth with their suited inhabitants and in due order to the glory of God. Hence, as we see, whatever be on high, the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. Where weakness was still, remedial grace was not wanting. The nations had the leaves, not a word for them about the fruits.

As an instance of the danger of speculation, through ignorance of the true bearing of these scriptures, let me call attention to the late Dean Alford’s note on the end of 21 to which his comment on 22:2 refers us. “There may be,—I say it with all diffidence,—those who have been saved by Christ without ever forming a part of his visible organized Church.” Of course, if he meant, when the church is glorified above, at Christ’s appearing and kingdom, the kings and nations of the earth form no part evidently of that higher object of divine mercy; why he should speak with diffidence of this, if it be all that is meant, is hardly intelligible. All that look with ordinary intelligence for Christ’s coming to introduce the kingdom of God over the earth, assert this without hesitation; and as Alford so believed, it is scarce accountable that he should adopt shyness so unusual. Can he by some confusion of mind have meant that people have been saved by Christ without ever forming a part of it, while the church has been on the earth? “And so perhaps some light may be thrown on one of the darkest mysteries of redemption.” I cannot comprehend such language in juxtaposition, unless this last be his thought. If so, it is groundless, false, and mischievous; and the whole connection unjustifiable. Not a word is said about the salvation of these nations (τῶν ὄντων in 24 being notoriously spurious and even absurd); and “the mysteries” of God, being now revealed by Christ, and since redemption especially, are in no wise “dark.” But the question raised is never in Scripture treated as a “mystery” at all, but as a plain and solemn warning to conscience in contradiction of the Dean’s imaginary “light.” “The darkest mysteries of redemption” are to a scripturally instructed mind a monstrosity.

It reminds one of the no less unhappy language on 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, which he applies, like the mass of men who do not understand the gospel, to Christ's preaching in His disembodied state to the disembodied spirits that refused God's voice at the flood which, he says, "throws blessed light on one of the darkest enigmas of divine justice, the cases where the final doom seems infinitely out of proportion to the lapse which has incurred it." And then he even goes on to limit that it would be presumption in us to limit its occurrence or its efficacy! If I had not spoken plainly of such perilous language during the writer's life, I might scruple to denounce it now that he is gone. The true inference to be drawn by every intelligent reader is that men of learning are peculiarly liable, if not solidly built up in the truth of Christ, to be carried away by appearances of erudition, especially if they plume themselves on superior honesty, which is often no more at bottom than a rash confidence in themselves and contempt of others. The worst of all is ignorance of redemption, and hence sacrificing foundation truth. If the reader desires a full view of the passage on all sides, he may find it in the "Bible Treasury," 9 pp. 11, 30, 46, 58, 89, 138, 169, 265, 278, 334. Could Dean Alford have so much as realized his own words? The true stumbling-block for unbelief is, not the flood coming on antediluvian violence and corruption, but the unending doom of all who believe not. Now the passage speaks not of the later, which was really in Alford's mind, but of the former which is independent of "the darkest enigma," as it certainly throws not a ray of what he calls "blessed light" on it. For what is implied in the inspired words is that those disobedient to the preaching of Christ's Spirit not only suffered a great temporal punishment but are now kept like unbelievers generally for the final judgment. The entire comment is as illogical as heterodox; and the philology is no better. Truth in all naturally goes together. Archbishop Leighton had the soundest reasons to treat the notion of Christ's descent into hell as a dream; and that this passage if duly weighed proves no way suitable, and cannot by the strongest wresting be drawn to fit such a purpose. Heartily, and after the most careful scrutiny do I agree with that able, learned, and pious prelate against a baseless if superficially plausible assumption.

Singular to say, Erasmus in 3 rightly deserted the Codex Reuchlini, where it, 7. 30., and some fifteen more, &c., read ἐκεῖ "there," for which the Rotterdam scholar conjectured, it is to be presumed in accordance with the Vulgate, ἔτι "more," or "longer": a dangerous device, though here in fact the great mass of the best authorities, unknown to him, were found afterward to justify the word. The Complutensian edition gives the erroneous reading ἐκεῖ. There was no reason for the Authorized Version to say "but," which the Revisers have replaced with "and." Absence of curse in the Now Jerusalem is accompanied by the throne of God and the Lamb; and if we have their distinctness thus preserved, the next words involve or rather convey their oneness: "and His (God and the Lamb's) servants shall serve Him." So it is habitually with John. In 4 the Revisers rightly say "on," (not "in") their foreheads." So in 5 they as properly explode the vulgar "there" (ἐκεῖ) which Erasmus introduced from his copy, perhaps assimilated to 21:25, though not unsupported; and they follow the true ἔτι "more," as in à A P, &c. There is yet another variety without either in the Basilian Vatican (2066) with considerable assent of other witnesses. The copies vary also in other particulars of no great moment, as "shall" give them light, in the best copies and even the Codex Reuchlini instead of the present as in Erasmus, and the Received Text, and the Authorized Version; and "upon" them, as in à A &c. "Lamp" is better than "candle."

Revised New Testament, Revised New Testament: Revelation 22:6-21

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

In 6 the first ὁ is doubtful, though given in à A 35. 92. The usual formula is κ. ὁ θ. as in B P and the cursives generally, as well as the Greek commentators. Chap. 21:22 may be judged favorable to the repeated article. But there need be no hesitation in adopting πνευμάτων τῶν "spirits of the" (instead of the vulgar "holy," ἁγίων 1. 79. &c.) with the Complutensian on the most ancient and ample authority, all the uncials, &c. The Sinaitic is not quite alone in the addition of με after "sent." 7 begins rightly with the copulative, as in the Complutensian, though Erasmus' Codex Reuchlini is sustained by many MSS., Versions, &c. The Revisers in 8 correctly say am he that heard and saw," not saw and heard. It is a characteristic fact apart from time. The best authorities also read τ. at the end of the clause. There are other differences of form not worth recording here. In 9 the γάρ "for" has no known authority in a Greek MS., and is probably due to Latin influence. It is not in the Codex Reuchlini. Of course the Complutensian edition is right. Tischendorf mentions the omission of Ka; by the Codex Reuchlini before "thy crown," but not again before "of them which keep." Erasmus supplied them rightly, though not from his copy. In 10 however the Complutensian agrees with Erasmus on the authority of a few copies (1. 49. 91. &c.) in reading ὅτι ὁ κ. instead of ὁ κ. with the best. Some manuscripts, as 4. 16. 27. 39. 48. 68. omit γάρ or ὅτι. In 11 ῥητῶν of the commonly received text is Erasmus' conjecture, his copy being defective from ὁ ῥ to δικ. ἔκ. The word should be ῥητωρός as in all the well known Greek copies; but ῥητωσάτω is likewise a similar guess, though the manuscripts divide between ῥηπανθήτω as in à 18. 32. and ῥηπαρωθήτω as in B and more than 30 cursives. The Alexandrian omits the clause, God. Eph. Resc. is defective. There need be no doubt that δικαιοσύνητω as in the Received Text from Erasmus, &c., must give place to the Complutensian reading δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω, which of course the Revisers follow, with the sense "do" or "practice" righteousness, not be justified or "be righteous" as in the Authorized Version. They are right also in rendering ἁγ. "be made holy," or sanctified. Again, at the beginning of 12 the copulative has no real place, though Erasmus found it in his copy and did not conjecture it; but it is excluded by the mass of MSS., Versions, and cursives. And the true reading is represented by "is," not "shall be," though B and more than 20 cursives favor the future form. "Amos" in 13 is all right in sense, but implied rather than expressed in the best copies. Without dwelling on lesser points, the chief difference is in the presence or absence of the article before πρ first and ἔσχ last, as well as before ἄρ. "beginning," and τ. "end," which by the best authorities close the sentence. The most extraordinary variant is in 14 where "that wash their robes," οἱ πλύνοντες (à A 7. 38. Vulg. Aeth., &c.) seems to be the true text. But it got changed into οἱ ποιοῦντες τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ "that do his commandments" in the common texts, Erasmus and the Complutensian, Stephens, Buza, and Elzevir. One could understand, as in Rom. 2, the unchanging character of God as reflected in His children, if the common reading were assuredly right; as it is, the critical text gives prominence to that washing by grace which supposes not more the shedding of Christ's blood than the guilt that demanded it if expiation were to be righteously. Such are they who have title to the tree of life and go in by the gates into the city. Verse 15 points out who are "without," the dogs and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie. There is no evil so desperate as refusing or giving up the truth when the full revelation of grace is come. There is no ascertained authority in any Greek copy for δέ, even the Codex Reuchlini giving no warrant to Erasmus, who transmitted it to our ordinary text. The article is rightly excluded from the last phrase. Tischendorf inverts the making and loving with 14 and half-a-dozen cursives, and a few ancient citations.

In 16 there is the variety of reading ἐτί ἐν, and neither before τ. ἕκκ. respectively, in à B, most cursives, Syr., in A 18. 21. 38. 79. Vulgate, and in 1. 4. 11. 12. 31. 47. 48. Arm., &c. “in” or “for” the churches. The reading καὶ ὀρθρινός is doubtless Erasmus' coinage from the Vulgate, for ὁ πρ. “the morning.” Why in 17 the Sinaitic omits the articles so requisite before πν. and ν. it is hard to say, but so it is. Erasmus knew better without a copy; for the Codex Reuchlini is defective from “David” in 16. But he wrongly introduced ἐλθέ and ἐλθέτω where the Holy Spirit has ἔρχου and ἐρχέσθω. Nor should the copulative precede ο θ. though at least two cursives and many ancient versions &c. favor it. For λαμβ. τὸ ὕδ the copies give λαβ. ὕδ. There is a threefold error in the common text at the beginning of 18: συμμαρτυροῦμαι for μαρτυρῶ, and γάρ, which answers to nothing, as well as the suppression of ἐλώ, the guess-work of Erasmus from following the Latin copies. So also the omission of τῶ. (though some copies omit it), τῆς, τοῦ, and the form ἐπιτιθῆ instead of ἐγώ, and for ἐπ' αὐτά, πρὸς ταῦτα, and ὁ θ before instead of after ἐπ' αὐτόν. The omission of τῶ before β. is due to the same Latinizing source. Aldus, in his reprint of Erasmus' New Testament for his Greek Bible of 1518, did venture on the supply of τοῦ, but not, strange to say, of τῆς, nor of τῶ (his), though of course the principle is the same. So in 19 ἀφαιρῆ is an evidently faulty effort to express the guilt of taking from the words of this inspired book, for which every manuscript has ἀφέλη, as βιβλίου is the correct form rather than βίβλου. Again ἀφαιρήσει is not the right expression but ἀφελεῖ. The next error goes beyond the form; for, as the Revisers agree with all critics, it is a question of “the tree,” not of the “book” of life here, an error due to Latin influence, though even then the form would be incorrect as before. Erasmus mistakenly added και before τ. γ. and omitted τῶ in the last clause. All these points are of course rectified in the Revision. The Complutensian edition is right, save in ἀφέλοι, though this is not without good support of MSS. In 20 Erasmus, the Complutensian, as well as Stephens with many cursives, read ναί after Αμῆν, for which Beza substituted καὶ “pro οὖν.” But even this was less daring than his notable proposal, founded on wholly unfounded premises, to dislocate verses 12 and 13 from their place and foist them in, the latter before the former, between that which is printed as verse 16 and verse 17, to the utter destruction of the context, and particularly of the vital tie which binds 17 to 16, one of the loveliest touches in a book abounding with beauty in this kind—In 21 à A 26. omit χριδοῦ, a rather slender ground for excluding “Christ.” Still less (A. and the Amiatine Latin) has Tischendorf for ending with μ. π. Even the Sinaitic says “with the saints,” as B. and the mass of cursives and versions say “with all the saints.” With “you” all is a guess of Erasmus, as far as Greek copies are concerned, though here again he was influenced by some of the Latins. It is not to be supposed that he knew ἡμῶν (30. &c.) for “our” Lord in the earlier part of the verse, but there too was misled by the Vulgate, &c. It is curious how the earliest, as well as the great multitude of copies, and versions &c., add ἀμῆν, which nevertheless the critics generally drop.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 2:1-7, Lectures on

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

We will now look at the first of the seven churches more particularly (ver. 1-7). First, let us observe that John is told to write to the angel of the church there. The address is no longer to “the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Nor is it to the saints with the bishops and deacons, as the word was to the Philippian church. Why is this? The Lord's ways are always full of grace; but they are righteous withal, and the church was a fallen and falling thing, so that He could no longer address them in His familiar love as formerly, Thus there was departure of the most serious kind from Himself, and John is directed to address, not the church, but its angel or representative. The angels spoken of in these epistles were men, and Must not be confounded with the class of spiritual beings called angels.¹ The apostle John is employed by the Lord to send a message to them, and it would be contrary to all the ways of God to use man as a messenger to angels in the ordinary meaning of the word. Angels often acted between God and man, but not men between Him and angels.

But, further, there is no sufficient ground to affirm that the angel here addressed, though a man, is in such an official place necessarily as a bishop or elder. He might have such a charge, or he might not. “The angel” always gives the thought of representation. In the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah, of the covenant, &c., and in Daniel we read of angels who were identified with Israel or other powers. In the New Testament we have the angels of the little children always beholding the face of their Father in heaven, which clearly means their representatives. So of Peter in Acts 12—they said it was his angel. We may gather then that the angel here, though a man, is, in some way or another, the ideal responsible representative of an assembly. Hence, it could be said, “I will take away thy candlestick.” It would be extremely objectionable to make this a defined official place, as it would introduce not merely a novelty, but one that clashes with all that is elsewhere taught in scripture as to the assembly. But it will not be doubted that in assemblies we find, as a fact, a particular person whom the Lord specially links with the assembly as characterizing it: he is morally identified with it, and receives from the Lord either praise or condemnation, according to the state of the assembly.

Here the angel is directly charged with the state of the assembly. The address being to him, and not to the assembly, put them, as it were, at farther distance from the Lord. What a tale this tells of the dreadful condition into which the Church had got! He could no longer address these assemblies immediately. He had spoken directly to the Corinthians even; for, guilty. as they were, they had not so loved Him, and then relaxed. But here the message is, “Thou hast left thy first love.” Yet, if He had not a faithful church, He had, at least, a faithful servant in John: and he it is who in the first instance is spoken to. And be it ever remembered that the church has never since recovered from that failure and place of comparative distance. The church, the house of God, is a complete ruin here below. And in ruin the first thing that becomes us is that we feel it.

This in no way touches eternal salvation; but the certainty of salvation is abused when employed to lessen what is due to God. In fact, there is never a real sense of sin before conversion; for if it could be then, it would be accompanied with absolute despair. But after, we have not conversion only, but perfect peace, we can bear to look at our sin, and we can afford to judge it thoroughly. A holy angel does not know God as we ought to do—I do not say as we do, though that be true also. An angel enters into the wonders of God's power, “hearkening unto the voice of His word.” But the depths of God come out, marvelous to say, about our sin, and in His only-begotten, “seen of angels” indeed, but in living relationship with us.

Here the Lord presents Himself as the One “that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” (Ver. 1.) He speaks of Himself as having authority over all the representatives of the heavenly light and going about among the vessels of His testimony. The representative is addressed, the assembly is none the less responsible and dealt with accordingly. He is come

to investigate, to judge,—not yet, of course, the ungodly world, but the assembly in Ephesus. What a difference between such a sight as this, and the view we have of Him and of the church too in Eph. 1. ii.! There He is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, and there too God has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. His hand is needed; for none but He could meet the difficulties. But is it not solemn that He is so presented to that very church, to which Paul had opened out the fullness of His heavenly grace, the fullness of their own blessing in Him? But here He is obliged, as it were, to walk and vindicate His authority, not among those who know Him not, but where His love had once been well known—alas! now forgotten and dishonored.

Observe the general character, as has been truly remarked, of this the first address throughout all its parts. Such is Christ's description; such is the sin; such the warning to the angel; and such the promise to the overcomer. His position is ecclesiastical generally, holding the seven stars and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

"I know thy works; and thy labor, and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men; and thou hast tried those that call themselves apostles and are not, and hast found them liars: and thou hast patience, and hast borne for my name's sake and art not wearied." (Verses 2, 3.)² Thus there were many things to praise. There was patience, and this is the first sign, if not the greatest, that Paul gives of his own apostleship. More than this: there is nothing more easy to break down than patience, after it has stood many a trial. But here, at Ephesus, there was endurance. (Compare verses 2, 3.) Again, where there is patience, there might be the tendency to pass over evil, or at least evil men. But it was not so here. They had borne for His name's sake, but they could not bear evil persons; and they had tried those that pretended to the highest place—to be apostles, and had found them liars. And thus they had gone on, and were not weary. How sweet of the Lord (in His sorrow and, if we may so say, His disappointed love) thus to begin with all that was good!

But though there was what He could praise, He had against them that they had left their first love. It is quite evident that this is nothing special, but the general spirit or principle of declension of the church at large. Indeed it is very broad: so the angels that left their first estate; so Adam; so Israel. Alas we must add now the assembly of God, blessed and loved beyond them all. They had let slip the consciousness of the Lord's love to them, and hence their own love to Him had waned. What produced love in them was their appreciation of the Lord's love.

Let me just remark that the word "somewhat," in ver. 4, seems to weaken the sense? It might convey to feel His love, not to return it consequently, was no small failure, especially where that love had once been enjoyed. But now it was faded, and what would not follow in time? "Remember, therefore, whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I am coming unto thee, and I will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." It is a much easier thing to be zealous in doing, than in repenting. But even this would not satisfy His heart, unless they got back to that first love which had produced their first works; otherwise the candlestick must be removed. The spring of grace is as gone.

I doubt, on grounds both external and internal, that "quickly" should be in ver. 5. For when He thus comes to judge the ways of His own people, can it be so said? Doubtless, when He comes, whether to fight with the Nicolaitanes, or to take us to Himself, it is quickly. (Rev. 2:16; 3:11; xxii 7, 12, 20.) But the Lord gives space for repentance, even if it were to Jezebel; and how much more to His beloved Ephesians?

The removal of the candlestick does not imply that the church might not go on apparently as before; but that it lost its place as a trustworthy witness for the Lord. Here again all is general: it would suit the Christian everywhere. Nothing makes up for distance between His people (or between the soul) and Christ. And such was the case, not merely with the assembly in Ephesus, but with the Church generally, I think we may say, even then. This, to my mind, confirms the successional aim of "the things which are." Outward testimony might go on, but that is not what the Lord most values; though value it He does, as far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still, He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, kept pure for Him from the world and its ways. God has called us for this: not only for salvation, and for a witness to Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ—a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ, and He at least has proved the fullness and faithfulness of His love to us. But what of ours?

The effect of thus looking at Christ is that the Church is kept in the dust, and yet always rejoicing in Him. For the sense of failure in ourselves and others would be oppressive, but that we are entitled to find our joy in One who has never failed, and who, notwithstanding, loves us who have given such a feeble and faltering witness for Him. Hence if we but go to Him so known, even in sorrowful confession, He will not let us part without blessing and strength. It is due to Him to own and feel our sin; but to be occupied merely with failure never gives power: Christ must have the glory. And assuredly He who has delivered us from the wrath to come, He who can save from hell, can keep or snatch from every ditch on earth. Only let the Christian confess his sin, cleaving to Jesus: this vindicates His name, who comes to his succor, and then the victory is sure.

But what a comfort and how reassuring to find that after His censure, the Lord again speaks of what He can commend! "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes which I also hate." (Ver. 6.) The essence of Nicolaitanism seems to have been the abuse of grace to the disregard of plain morality. The Ephesians saints had failed in cleaving with fresh fervor to that which is good, but they had fellowship with the Lord, rejecting false pretensions and abhorring what is evil. People often say, there is no such thing as a perfect church on earth. I would ask such what they mean by a perfect church. Will any Christian man tell me that we are not to aim at everything consistent with the holiness of God? I claim for the church just what must be allowed for every individual Christian. As there may be too many faults in the individual, so there may be in the church. But then there is this blessedness, that, as there is One who dwells in the individual to guide and bless him, so the same Spirit dwells in the church, and Christ cleanses it with the washing of water by the word. With the assembly, as it is with the individual, who has both the Holy Ghost who is the power of good, and the flesh which lusts against Him. As, in a man, the soul may be said to pervade the whole body, animating it in every part; so it is with the Spirit in the church of God. When persons maintain that holiness may be tolerated because no man is free from sin, it is antinomianism; and I believe it to be the very principle of the Nicolaitanes. Each individual is bound to be ready to meet the Lord, having nothing left to be wound up when He comes. The Lord looks for the same thing from the assembly, because there is a divine power against evil in the church as in the saint.

Then comes the promise, with the word of admonition before it; and all is very general, like the danger and the threat. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God." (Ver. 7.)

As for the paradise of creation, man had been put there and tried by the simplest test of obedience in a single instance; but he fell. Now a new scene is opened. It is no longer the garden of Eden, but the paradise of God—"of My God," says the Lord Jesus—not of God only, in contrast with man, but of "My God," as Jesus knew Him. Into this redemption brings us. And therein is no tree of responsibility that could bring in sorrow and death. The tree of life alone is there, which the glorified saint shall enjoy in peace. The church in Ephesus had fallen, it is true, from first love: but is anything too hard or good for the Lord? Did any feel deeply and aright the wrong that was done to His grace? If there was but one who overcame (for overcoming it must be now, by faith, not mere preservation of original blessing, and overcoming inside the church too) to him was this promise given to comfort and cheer his soul. The Lord's grace is just as full now. May there be none here who have not ears to hear: if there are any who have, may they hear and overcome!

It is all well to "hear the church" in discipline, confiding in Him who is in the midst. But when the church leaves its first love, and claims all the more loudly to be heard, taking the place of Christ or of the Spirit, pretending to teach, what then? "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches." Individual responsibility comes distinctly out now in Christianity (as in Matt. 13, after the proclamation in chapter xii. of the judgment of Israel).

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 2:8-11, Lectures on

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Ver. 8-11. In Ephesus we have seen departure from first standing. The next state is a different one. We have the church at Smyrna in trouble; the saints of God are suffering. They may have thought the fiery trial some strange thing that had happened to them. But, on the contrary, it is more true that the Lord is grieved with a Christian when He leaves him without trouble for righteousness or for His name's sake. The Lord had Himself known tribulation to the utmost; but in Him it was only the trial of the good that was within, and the bringing out of His perfection. And poor as we are, we too may know trial apart from our evil. The Lord has two objects in view when He lays His hand upon a Christian in the way of chastening. It may come either because there has been something wrong, or because he is in danger of it and this is little felt by him. When David was out of tribulation, he falls into a snare. When his circumstances were full of trouble, then it was that he (inspired, of course, by the Holy Ghost) poured out those sweet strains that we read with joy to this day. The desire to get out of trial is a perilous thing for the soul. The trial may be sent to show us what we really are, or, what is better, to prove what God is for us and to us: but it may be also sent to prevent us from falling into sin. The Lord, in His love, thus often averts the evil which He sees and we do not. I do not doubt that there is another and a deeper character of suffering, even fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, which must not be confounded with the Lord's faithful discipline, though, sometimes, I suppose, the two things may be in a measure combined. In a certain sense all saints suffer now with Him, though all may not be called to suffer for Him.

In Smyrna the Lord appears to have been meeting the declension from first love that had set in, and, in order to do this, He sent tribulation. It is no uncommon case—thanks to His name, for He is good and faithful. In what capacity does He speak to them? "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." His title, first of all, is that of a divine person as against Satan. The Spirit claims for Jesus here, what Isaiah had before challenged for Jehovah. (Isa. 41:4.) And what was there that could not be claimed for Him? He "which was dead and is alive." What a comfort for those who were in trial! Who is it that speaks to them in their tribulation? The One who had been in the deepest of sorrow and had gone through death itself. He who was the First and the Last, and who had formed all, - He was the One that had died and was alive again. And this is the very One that I have to flee to in my trial. You will see thereby what a connection there is between the quickening of the dead, and the comfort of those who are in trial. (Compare 2 Cor. 1-5) Jesus was God, but He was man also. He was the suffering man, and He was the triumphant man; and as such He was able to comfort them in their tribulation. What had He not gone through Himself?

"I know [thy works and] tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but [are] the synagogue of Satan." (Ver. 9.) The word "Jews" here is used symbolically. It was a name given to the nation that was known as God's people, above all others, in olden time; and these symbols were taken from the Old Testament. It seems to mean persons who, taking the place of being children of God, went back to hereditary religion. On the one hand, there was this outward trouble, which the Lord allowed for their blessing, and, on the other, there were those who were insisting on Jewish principles. (Phil. 3:2.) But the Lord says, "Fear not those things which thou shalt suffer." Do not mind what persons say, or things done against you. "Behold the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried." Thus, by God's grace, the enemy himself is used as an instrument for the good of God's people in the persecutions which he stirs up against them. There is nothing, on the other hand, whereby Satan more effectually draws aside than through a sort of quiet, easy-going, half and—half Christianity. God grant that His children may be preserved from having two faces or characters - that the Christian may never be worldly with worldly people, and then put on the ways and words of a saint with his brethren.

It is no new thing for the Lord thus to allow the efforts and enmity of Satan for the blessing of His saints. In the case of Job we see the same thing: indeed the Lord probed His servant there far more deeply. At each successive trial from Satan, Job retained his integrity, and blessed the Lord.; but the Lord showed Job himself—the very thing he needed for the full blessedness of turning away from self to the Lord. Then He showed him God, and Job's comfort at last was as deep as his self-abasement.

Job had no idea that he thought too much of himself; but this was just what God had to show him he did. He loved to recall the time when the fruits of godliness in him drew forth the respect and esteem of men. But God showed him how evil a thing it is to be occupied with the effects of grace in himself or on others. What the enemy of God and man could not do, Job's friends did. He could stand against the temptations of Satan, but he was provoked to folly by his friends coming to condole with him, and giving their misdirected opinions. When a person talks much about grace, not a little unjudged self is apt to be found there, we may be sure. Even Job had to be put in the furnace to find out that there was a great deal more besides grace in him. But though Satan might tempt without success, and his friends only provoke, when the

Lord Himself comes in, then Job is soon thoroughly humbled. He sees himself in the light of the presence of God, and exclaims, "Mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But the end of the Lord is as good at least as his beginning. He is ever pitiful, and of tender mercy. And it is when Job thinks nothing of himself that the true stream of grace flows out, and he prays for his friends. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

The case of Smyrna follows that of Ephesus. As already hinted, I should apply the church of Smyrna to the time when the church was called to pass through the tribulation that followed the era of the apostles- the persecutions that were inflicted on the Christians by the Roman emperors. But it is good to remember that all is measured of the Lord. "Behold the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." (Ver. 10.) The sufferings, death for Christ's sake, &c., of the Christians, were the few bright spots and manifestations of life in the second and beginning of the third centuries.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Ver. 10.) The distinction of God's servants in glory is an important doctrine. For while it is essential to maintain that the very same grace which pardoned the thief on the cross was needed to save Paul of Tarsus, yet it would be a grand mistake to suppose that the thief will have the same reward in glory. Nevertheless, we must not be afraid; when the Lord says to us, "I know thy works." For though the vessels that are to contain the blessing may not be equally large, the little cup will be as full as the big one; and full, if I may so say, of the same materials of joy and blessing. In a glorified state there will be no such thing, of course, as a person being tried-no question of being faithful or unfaithful then. Before we get there, spiritual differences exist; and when we are there, the distinctions of Christ's kingdom will answer to the character and measure of service here below, though the sovereignty of God must be maintained also. (Matt. 19 xx.)

There was this suited word of comfort to the faithful in Smyrna— "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Ver. 11.) Do not fear the first death; it is only a servant to usher you into the presence of God. The second death will not touch you. The Lord is like that tree of old which was cast into the waters of Marah. He went into the bitterest waters of death, which have thus been changed into sweetness and refreshing for us.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 2: 12-18, Lectures on: Pergamos

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Ver. 12-18. The Lord here announces Himself to the angel of the church in Pergamos as One who was armed with all-searching power by the word of God, the piercing word that judges. In the book of Revelation, the sharp sword is at the command of the Lord Jesus, as the instrument of judgment. What the sword does in the hand of man, the word of searching judgment does which the Lord applies in power; it decides all questions that have to do with Him. There is always a great and beautiful connection between the way or title in which He presents Himself and the state of the church which He is addressing. It was because the word was no longer that which had living energy to judge in the church, that the Lord Jesus takes care to show that it had never lost its power in His hands. As the first church shows us declension set in, even in the days of the apostle John, and Smyrna the time of persecution from the heathen, so here we have a totally different state of things. Pergamos is the scene of Satan's flattering power or seduction, which was just what he used after the violence of persecution had spent itself. It was a more dangerous device than the second; for when our hearts are set on anything that is wrong, there is nothing that more shows God against our ways than His giving us up to our own will. "Ephraim is joined unto idols: let him alone." In the case of Smyrna it was the contrary of this; it was the Lord intercepting the power of Satan through persecution from without, which was used of God to hinder the growing corruption within.

After that, the god of this world promised Christians every worldly advantage. The emperor himself offered to become a Christian, though he put off baptism till his death-bed. There was no plainer proof how completely the church has fallen and had departed from the Lord's name, than when it accepted the emperor's terms and the patronage of the world. Even those who were saved had entirely lost sight of what the church was, as not belonging to the world but of heaven. The Roman empire was essentially the world's power. The church had been called out to be the standing witness of these two things: first, of the world's ruin; and secondly, of God's love. But when we see the church shaking hands with the world, all is gone, and the church falls right down into the mind of this age. If the world gains in some respects, the church loses in everything; and no wonder, because it is at the cost of the will and glory of Christ.

Satan's "throne" is the sense: in presence of it, who does not see the propriety with which the Lord presents Himself, as armed with the sharp two-edged sword? It is the same word as is used for "seat," as well as "throne" in other parts of this very book; but here it is properly a "throne," because Satan is spoken of in respect of authority. It is obvious that all this exactly describes the state of things in Constantine's time. "Instead of being at the stake and suffering for Christ's sake, the church was now yoked with the world in a mere profession of Christianity; for as the world did not really rise to Christ, the church must sink to the world's level. No wonder the Lord says thereon, "Thou dwellest where Satan's throne is." Yet He allows all that He can, even where this miserable association was found—His assembly dwelling where Satan's throne was. They maintained still His name, and did not deny the faith which was given to the Saints; but that was all. They had just come out of the great persecution in which Antipas was slain. But now the church at Pergamos, instead of suffering, was dwelling quietly in the world. Like Lot, they too had their righteous souls vexed with the ungodliness of those around.

The Lord, accordingly, brings forward the things of which He had to warn them. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." (Ver. 14). What was the leading feature we see in the son of Beor? He was led by his covetousness to try and serve the bad king of Moab by cursing the people of God. When God gave him an answer, he goes to God a second time, because his heart wanted its own way. And it is solemn to learn that if God gives you up, you may get what you want. Balaam afterward falls into even worse evil. He was indeed a man whose heart was not with God. He said some true things, but his spirit was not in them. He always speaks as it were from without, as a miserable man, afar from the blessing which he saw. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh," &c. He goes on, step by step, until he lends himself to be the corrupter, through the world, even of God's chosen people. And so it was with the church. Even the philosophers began to take up Christian truth, and in the writings of the fathers we find pretty much what we have here. What fornication is in

moral things, such as their illicit commerce with the world in the things of God. There were, I doubt not, witnesses who were made very little account of, save in heaven; but one of the men who had the largest and most lasting influence of all, Augustine, was a true saint of God, and, though that is not saying much, the greatest light of the western church. He had held the name of Christ and had not denied his faith. All agree that these epistles applied primarily to the churches to which John wrote: but many do not see that they also apply to different stages of the Church, and describe its various states successively.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes¹ seems an evil from within, as that of Balaam was rather from without. Such it was in principle and doctrine now. We read of their deeds in Ephesus, but this went farther and deeper. It was a corruption of grace, a turning it to licentiousness. Sanctity is the greatest snare if it be not real, yea, if it flows not from the truth; yet nothing more terrible than that where grace is known or at least talked of, it should be abused. If we search our own hearts and ways, we shall find that it is the very thing we all tend to do. Grace has set us completely free through Him who died and rose again, and what claim has it not on our hearts? Do we not often treat God's grace to us in the very same way that our children in their most hardened mood treat us? They then take all as a matter of right. Though creation has been brought under subjection to vanity on account of Adam's sin, yet there is no moral evil connected with its lower forms. But in man's case it is not so. Knowing the evil, he yet goes on in it. And even when we have got the certainty of deliverance, if the joy of it have passed away in a measure, we begin to use the Lord's grace just to serve ourselves. This, carried out without conscience, is Nicolaitanism. God's grace was meant to bind us thoroughly to Himself. We might see a person fall into evil (and this, of course, is sorrowful indeed, in a Christian); but there is a great deal more of evil that others do not see. God gives us the opportunity of judging ourselves when no one else, perhaps, knows anything about it. If we do not judge it, then the end here below is that the judgment of the world comes, and we may be sure what a vast amount of evil must have gone on in secret, when God allows us to fall so that the very world judges our course as evil. But we must not be discouraged. It is just where the truth is most preached and held, that Satan will invariably try to bring in the worst of heresies, in order to bring shame upon the testimony of God. When a man slips from the highest pinnacle, of course he will have a more terrible fall; as also it will be much more manifest to the world than if he had merely upset on the plain.

The Lord does not say, "I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth," but "against them." (Ver. 16.) The sword of judgment may, it is true, act in taking them away by death, as in the case of the Corinthian saints, who were judged of the Lord here below that they might not afterward be condemned with the world. Christian discipline does not mean putting away those who are not Christians from those who are; rather it contemplates the purging out of Christians who are walking wrongly, in order to maintain the honor and holiness of the Lord in their midst. Mercy is the great motive of discipline, next to the maintaining of Christ's character in the church. It is at the bottom of the Lord's ways with us, and surely it should be so for us with others.

The fact of the church's getting into the world isolated at once the faithful Christian. The church only became invisible through sin. It was not God's intention, it is not according to His heart, that it should ever be so, though I believe that all was permitted and ordered wisely. God did not make a light to be hid, but to be set on a candlestick. Such was the fact now: Catholicism reigned, if you take the protracted view, which soon paved the way for Popery. But if the word, penetrated him who had an ear hear, it gave secret fellowship with Christ when the public position had become settledly false. Hence to a true-hearted saint, amid all this ruin and confusion, He says, "I will give to eat of the hidden manna." (Ver. 17.) The manna represents Christ Himself as He came down from heaven and took a place of abasement in the world. Those who were slipping away into the world are reminded of the place which Christ took down here. The "hidden manna" refers to the use which was made of the manna for the ark: a certain portion of it was taken into the holy place as a memorial before God. The faithful are to eat not of the manna only, but of the hidden manna.

It is not merely that we shall share in and enjoy with Christ all His glory as exalted on high and as displayed before the world.; but God will give us special communion with Christ as He was here below. The sweet thing in the glory will be that the blessed One, who has brought us into all the enjoyment and peace of heaven, is the same One we have known in all His path of sorrow and rejection in this world, with whom we have shared it ever so feebly here, feeding on Him as our portion even now. The white stone was a mark of entire acquittal. May we be thus looking forward to Christ; and may God give us to taste His own delight in His Son as He was here below, in His outcast position I May we have, besides, the white stone, the portion of the faithful in a state of things like that of Pergamos when the church and the world were enjoying themselves together! When in heaven such will enjoy the same food that sustains them here. Christ will still be your food even in the glory, and you will have the white stone, "and on the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth save he that receiveth it" (i.e. the expression of Christ's own secret satisfaction in the way in which you have suffered for Him and served Him below). Assuredly the heart will most prize what Christ will give between Himself and it alone—what none will know but ourselves and Himself. The Lord grant that we may have tokens of love for Him, although none should know them but Himself now. Even in glory the joy of His secret approval will not be lost but known more profoundly than ever.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 2:18-3:16, Lectures on: Thyatira

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Ver. 18-28. There is an important change that occurs in this chapter, beginning with the epistle to Thyatira. In the first three churches the warning word ("He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches") comes before the promise; but all the four concluding churches have the promise before the call to hear. These at least will be found to be the representatives of states of the church which go down to the end.

Now there must be a reason for it—a wise and sufficient reason why the Holy Ghost should uniformly adopt one arrangement in the three earlier epistles, and as uniformly depart from this and adopt another arrangement in the four last. There is nothing haphazard in the word. As everything He has done in His dealings with man, as all that He has made even in creation, has its purpose impressed by Him, so much more is it with that word which developer His ways and displays His moral glory. And this is of vast practical moment to us. For, remember, the secret of strength is in a Spirit-taught knowledge of God and His ways in Christ. To enter into and enjoy the thoughts and feelings of God as manifested in what He does and says, in His own revelation of Himself, is that which wins and keeps, purifies and strengthens the heart of the

believer. Israel did not understand His ways, and, therefore, never knowing His heart, they erred in their own; as it is said, "they do always err in their heart, for they have not known my ways." Moses, on the other hand, did appreciate the heart of God, and accordingly of him it is written that "the Lord made known His ways unto Moses."

In the first three churches, then, the call to hear is addressed formally to the whole assembly concerned; but in the last four the change of situation appears to mark greater reserve. The Lord no longer, as it were, expects any to hear but him who overcomes, and this class is thenceforth, in a manner, singled out from the rest. Evil had now set in over the professing body; so that the promise is not, and could no longer be, held out in the old indiscriminate way. From this distinction we gather a remnant begins to be more and more clearly indicated.

Something analogous to this appears elsewhere. Thus, in the seven parables of Matt. 13 the last three were unquestionably marked off from their predecessors, and were addressed to a higher degree of spirituality. The first four were uttered outside to the multitude, the last three to the disciples only within the house. Wherever we find in the Bible a series of parables, prophetic visions, or the like, grouped together as these are, there is commonly, not to say invariably, some such line drawn between those which commence with a general bearing, and those which become more special and narrow as we approach the goal. This is strikingly true of these Apocalyptic epistles, the last four of which sever the overcomer from the unfaithful surrounding mass. In short, the formation of a faithful remnant, who were at first, I suppose, only morally separate from the body which bore the Lord's name (now alas! untrue), becomes increasingly distinct. In the case of Thyatira the Spirit of God seems to make the principle plain and patent, as will appear presently.

The Lord Jesus introduces Himself here in His character of Son of God, followed by a description borrowed in the main from the vision which the apostle had seen in chap. i. "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God that hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass" (ver. 18).

If we trace what the scriptures say of the Lord Jesus viewed thus, two things more particularly are seen. As Son of God, He is the source and sovereign giver of life (John 5). The life which we by faith derive ("for he that believeth hath everlasting life") from the Lord Jesus Christ, is life in such power, that even the bodies of such as possess it in Him will rise from the graves to a life-resurrection; while others who have it not must rise to a judgment-resurrection (John 5:28, 29). In the resurrection of judgment none can be saved. No Christian will appear before the judgment-seat of Christ as a criminal to be tried. All Christians will appear before it (as must all men), but the result before the world will be, in spite of loss of reward in certain cases, their glorious manifestation as justified men. But if you or I had to appear to see whether we were righteous, and so could escape condemnation, could there be one ray of hope for us? Notwithstanding, there never can be, or at least there never ought to be, a doubt as to the absolute salvation of those who have life in and from the Son of God. The judgment-seat of Christ will clearly display them as justified persons; but we need not and should not wait for the judgment-seat to know that we are justified: we are dishonoring God's grace and His Son's work not to know it now, "whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." Faith is entitled by divine warrant to a full justification, now and here below, according to the worth and acceptance of the Lord Jesus in God's sight.

And this leads me to the second of the things I had alluded to, as connected with the "Son of God." He gives liberty as well as life. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). These are the two great aspects of blessing which characterize Jesus as the Son of God. He imparts not only life, but liberty too. Not that they have always or necessarily gone together. For a man might have spiritual life and yet be in grievous bondage, as one observes too often. This is also what we read of in Rom. 7. A person who is converted has life, but may be withal the most miserable of men as regards his own experience. "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In chap. viii. we have the answer of grace. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free (or delivered me), from the law of sin and death." Liberty now goes with the life of the Son of God, for He is the risen Lord who died for me and discharged me from all the claims of law and of every other thing or one which might else arrest my blessing. The servant does not abide ever in the house, he might have notice to quit; but there is no such thing as the son's leaving the house. And it is thus, as sons, God puts us in His house, in the place of full and holy liberty.

What a searching but blessed title this was for the Lord Jesus to take, especially if He was not only providing for the then need of the assembly in Thyatira, but picturing besides that state of departure from truth, and even the depths of Satan, which characterized the middle ages! In Ephesus, when almost all the apostles had disappeared from the world, there was decay of first love; in Smyrna, persecution from the heathen powers; then in Pergamos, the allusion is plain to the era when Christianity gained the ascendant in the world, and when consequently the church consummated and sealed the loss of her sacred and heavenly separateness upon the earth. The power of the world never gained a greater victory than when it was externally vanquished by the cross; when, by merely professing Christ's name in baptism, all the Roman world was treated as born of God—in short, when apparently heathenism, but really Christianity, succumbed before the rising sun of Christendom. In many respects it may have been a mercy for mankind, as it certainly was the greatest event in the government of the world since the flood; but who can estimate the loss for the saints, and the dishonor of their Lord, when the Christian body exchanged their place of suffering now in grace, hoping for glory with Christ at His coming, for present authority in, yea over, the world? In Thyatira we arrive at a period darker still— the natural consequence of those pleasures of sin for a season. When the empire professed the cross and arrayed it with gold, it was not only that God's children were favored and caressed, instead of having to wander in sheep-skins and goat-skins, or to hide in dens and caves of the earth, but inevitably their enemies were attracted, and the Balaam-state became developed, and man ran greedily after error for reward. But the Jezebel-state is worse even than that, and most significant of the bloody and idolatrous prophetess who sought to be universal mistress in the so-called dark ages, and dark indeed they were! Of this I believe the church in Thyatira to be the remarkable foreshadowing.

But the Lord loves to praise what He can, and it is in a dreary time that He is glad to be able to approve of the least good. Here in the growing darkness of the public state, there was growing devotedness among the real saints. "I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, (for this is the true order,) and thy patience, and thy last works [to be] more than the first" (ver. 19). "And thy works" ought to be left out, and the clause following should be, "and thy last works," &c., on ample authority, which the sense, I think, fully confirms to a spiritual mind. "But I have against thee that thou sufferest the woman [or, thy wife] Jezebel that calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and deceiveth my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Thus there was much energy and devoted service; but withal the greatest evil threatened them or even then was at work.

When Jezebel sat as a queen in Israel, all was ruin and confusion; but the Lord did not fail to raise up a suited witness for Himself. It was then that we find an Elijah and an Elisha, and even another where naturally one might least expect it—in the very house where evil was paramount. There was he who gave refuge and food to the persecuted prophets of the Lord. Just as in the New Testament we hear of saints chiefly to be saluted who were of Cesar's household, so of old there was an Obadiah, who feared the Lord greatly, over the house of Ahab "which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." It was then too was found the remnant of 7000, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. I think the Lord would have said of that remnant what we have in the epistle to Thyatira- "thy last works more than the first." The wickedness of those who surrounded them made their faithfulness more precious to the Lord; and He praises them more, perhaps, we may add, than if they had lived in a day less trying; just as, on the other hand, He cannot but deal most sternly with evil, which is done in a day of special light and mercy, How many Ananiases and Sapphiras have there been since Pentecostal times, who have not been visited in the same open and unsparing way as when great grace was upon all! This is an encouragement to us who know ourselves to be exposed, not indeed to a storm of persecution, but to a season far more perilous. There never was a time when man thought better of himself; and this is so much the graver sin, inasmuch as the testimony of God's truth to the contrary has been widely spread abroad. I do not deny that it is a day of no small effort among Christians. But "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;" and never has there been less subjection to the will of God than at this moment. There is much association, which sounds well,—much taking counsel together; but confederacy is one thing, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit is another and widely different thing. But the Lord says, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." The matter of real weight is not getting Christians together, even if they were all Christians, but together in the Lord's way and for the Lord's glory as their object—the "one thing" they have to do. If but two or three are thus gathered unto His name, we have His own assurance that His power and blessing will be there, spite of all appearances to the contrary. Had we two or three thousand together, but not in immediate subjection to the Lord Jesus, we should have only shame and sorrow in the end, however it might look for awhile. If we are seeking to please men, so far we cannot be the servants of Christ.

It was, then, it seems to me, when the Lord has before His eye the state of a church which might well prefigure the dark development of an after-day, (when the saints should be in great bondage, and that which was altogether alien in the midst persecuting them, and His own authority null in practice,) that He brings out His title of "Son of God," whose eyes were as a flame of fire and His feet like burnished brass. Peter of old had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; and thereon the Lord, immediately after pronouncing him blessed and emphatically naming him by the new name He had given, adds, "upon this rock I will build my church." Now, alas! the Lord anticipates that the professing church would lose its balance and set itself up virtually in His own place, giving out that she, the lady, "which calleth herself a prophetess," was to be heard in matters of faith, not He, the Lord. Here then we have the assertion of His personal glory and the attributes of His all-searching and unbending judgment of men—a serious but comforting thought for His own people, who might be in the midst of this sad confusion, and the perfect provision of His wisdom to deliver them from what was setting or set in. They would need and enjoy the immutable foundation, the Son of God, and the assurance that His church built on that rock could not fail, when public appearances were against it as against Himself in Israel. They were worse than nothing in the eyes of their persecutors; they were precious in Christ. It was a severer trial than from Jews or heathens; but the Son of God was no heedless spectator of all. So, too, His promise (26, 27) ought to guard them from seeking a present kingdom, a so-called spiritual millennium without Christ, where they should be either free to enjoy the world or entitled to govern it as yet.

In the church at Thyatira there were faithful and loving souls, earnest too, especially in good works; but there was this plague spot also—the sufferance of "that woman Jezebel." Jezebel, as we are told here, was a false prophetess, who was teaching and deceiving Christ's servants to commit fornication and eat idol sacrifices. This was worse than the iniquity of him who loved the wages of unrighteousness, a step farther even in Balaam's line. "And I gave her space to repent and she is not willing to repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches will know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to you, each one, according to your works," (verses 21-23).

What could be more shocking than the evil here foreshown! Jezebel, as all knew, was one who added violence to corruption, the counselor of blood, the active hater of all God's witnesses, the patroness in private and public of the idolatrous priests and prophets of Baal. And now, in Thyatira, there was that which intimated to the Lord's eye the dark and cruel idolatry which was to be formally taught and imposed by a pretended infallible authority within the bosom of the professing church. Even now the actual germ could not be hid from Him whose eyes were as a flame of fire. Jezebel was there and "her children" too. It was a deep and lasting source of evil. But the judgment of her and of all that sprang from her was severe, however it might seem to linger. The Lord discerns different degrees of connection; but none should go unpunished, let Christendom decide as they might that evil must be allowed under His adored name Repentance was absolutely refused, though the Lord had given ample space for it. "Fornication" (for such is the figure used) was both taught and practiced. Long patience on His part is the sure sign, both that the object to be judged was in a thoroughly evil condition, (else He comes quickly in the jealous care of true love that counts on a true answer), and that when the judgment comes, it must be definitive and unsparing. "The woman," it has been long remarked, symbolizes the general state, as "the man" has the place of responsible activity.

The words "a few things," in verse 20, must disappear. It was not a little complaint, but one of unusual gravity and complication. The phrase crept in, I conceive, from verse 14, as there is otherwise resemblance enough to suggest such an assimilation to a copyist. But on a closer inspection the difference, as we have seen, is great, especially if we are to read "thy wife Jezebel." The sin of fornication or adultery here is symbolical of that wicked commerce with the world, which is in the same relation to the Christian or the Church, as intermarriage with a Canaanite would have been to an Israelite. To eat idol-sacrifices sets forth communion with what had a direct link with the power of Satan, for "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God"; and it is an easy thing, little as men may think it or Christians may estimate aright its enormity, to have fellowship with devils.

Besides the leading corruptness and fountain-head of the mischief, we have two classes of persons mentioned who were guilty in a positive way. There were Christ's servants whom she deceived to illicit commerce with the world, and there were others who were the immediate offspring of Jezebel, "her children." With each one the Lord would deal according to his works. He was the righteous Judge, and man, as such, must be judged, and all, saints or sinners, must be manifested before His judgment-seat. Yet it is remarkable how the Lord avoids saying that the saints will be judged. "I will give," says He, "to you, each one according to your works;" and so in chap. xxii. 12, and many similar

scriptures. On the one hand, we are positively told that the believer shall not come into judgment (for John 5:24 means "judgment," and not "condemnation," however certainly this is the result of it). On the other hand, we know from Rev. 20:12, 13, that the wicked are to stand before the throne, and to be judged, each one according to their works. Their resurrection is one of judgment, (and in effect, of condemnation,) contrasted with that of the righteous, which is a life-resurrection. Thus, it is certain that, if put on my trial for salvation or perdition, according as my works deserve, I must be lost, for I have sinned and have sin; yet is it equally sure that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget the work and labor of love, and so He will give to each one according to his, works. Christ Himself, Christ's love, is the only right motive for a Christian in anything; but there are rewards for those who have suffered for Christ and been cast out for righteousness' or for His name's sake.

The remnant comes out with great clearness in the next verse. "But unto you I say, the rest (or "remnant;" omitting the words "and unto," which have no right to be here) in Thyatira." (Ver. 24.) Here we have a faithful few, who are called "the rest," distinguished from the mass in Thyatira. The Lord had been speaking of His servants who had been seduced to dally with the evil of Jezebel, and of her own children, for which last class there was to be no mercy from Him. Then another class is addressed, the remnant, or "you that remain." The corrupt exterior body goes on, and there is a remnant that the Lord now had specially in view. He supposes them to be ignorant of what Christendom then counted knowledge and only says, "whosoever have not this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, (as they speak,) I put upon you no other burden, but that which ye have, hold fast till I come." (Verses 24, 25.) These "depths of Satan" they had not known. They valued no knowledge which undermined the call to holiness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and this beginning they feared to let slip; and they were right. It might be but negative; but they had kept clear of a great evil, and holding their little fast, they would surely have their reward when the Lord comes. There were those who suffered much for Christ, who witnessed for Him in these dark ages. Such were the Albigenses and Waldenses; and "you, the rest in Thyatira," I take to refer to these persecuted companies, who held tenaciously what they had from God. They did not know much, but they were a remnant separated in conscience and suffering from the evil around them, from Jezebel. Their comfort lies in no promise of amendment in the Church, but in a hope outside all on earth, even the kingdom and coming of Christ in person. Meanwhile they are called to overcome and keep Christ's works unto the end.

There could not be a more admirable sketch in a few words than what we have here. And it is not a little remarkable that the book of the Revelation was much prized by these saints. Indeed, this has always been more or less the case in times of persecution—not that it is the best motive, for the book is valued most when the Lord leads His people, to wait for His return. But His tenderness to His sufferers in a dark day is most sweet; and what a promise! "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations," &c. (Ver. 26, 27.) What the mediaeval church arrogantly and wickedly sought, the saints she persecuted or despised are yet to possess in the coming and kingdom of their Lord, and these hopes accordingly are here brought in as their suited objects. The guilty church was not more cruel towards the true saints than ambitious of power over the world. Things ecclesiastical had got to their grossest point. But it is good to wait for the Lord's way and time: He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. When the earthly power has been put aside and judged, those who have suffered with Christ shall reign with Him. But He adds more than authority over the nations, and ruling them with a rod of iron.. as Christ also received of His Father. "And I will give him the morning star." (Ver. 28.) This is most blessed: not merely association with Christ in the day of His power, when the stronghold of men shall be broken to shivers, like the vessels of a potter, but "gathering together unto Him" before that day. The hope abides in all its fullness, and as fresh as at the first. Christ only could so speak and act.

The sun, when it rises, summons man to his busy toil, but the morning-star shines for those only who sleep not as do others—for those who watch as children of light and of the day. We shall be with Christ doubtless when the day of glory dawns upon the world; but the morning-star is before the day, and Christ not only says "I am.... the bright and morning star," but "I will give....the morning-star." He will come and receive His heavenly ones before they appear with Him in glory. May we be true to Him in the refusal of present ease, and honor, and power I May we follow Him, taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily! He will not forget us in His day, and He will give us, ere that comes, the Morningstar.

I would here add, in closing this sketch of Rev. 2, that Thyatira has a sort of transitional place, being linked with the three preceding churches as on church ground, whatever the corruption allowed which characterized its public state. On the other hand, it is connected with the three churches which follow on the ground of truth or testimony (not regularly ecclesiastical), both as being the first of those marked by the change of position in the call to hear, and as also expressly running down to the end. The others were transient phases. This begins the more permanent states in view of the Lord's advent. It may be noticed accordingly that the dealing after Thyatira, when threatened, falls on the angel: up to this it had been either on the candlestick, as in Ephesus, or on the evil-doers, as in Pergamos and Thyatira. Smyrna and Philadelphia have a special exemption, one in each of the two series. To the angel of the church in Sardis the word is, "I will come on thee as a thief;" when similar language was used in a former case, Christ said "I will fight against them" &c., "I will cast her" and "I will kill her children," &c. In the latter series it is a question of a separated witness in Christendom, where fidelity is everything, as with the disciples in the gospel. Judgment must fall on the whole, though not without distinguishing the true-hearted. In this new part (with a slight exception in Sardis, which is necessary and only proves the rule), the titles of Christ are distinct from those seen in the opening vision of chap. 1., and point to His future reign. This is seen with special emphasis in Laodicea, so that "the things that are" may vanish away thenceforth, as in fact they do.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 3:1-6, Lectures on: Sardis

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Ver. 1-6. I think that any discerning reader must perceive that we are entering upon an entirely new order of things in this chapter, or, at least, a sort of fresh start. What was described in the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the candlesticks is not here as in chap. ii., unless it be the "seven stars," no longer, however, held in His right hand. It is quite true that what we have been looking at, in the former chapter, may still exist and be verified at the same time with new features as they are brought out here. Not only may there be points morally like

what we have seen in Ephesus, Smyrna, or Pergamos, but a continuing public state like the evil depicted in the message to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira, which goes on to the end in a way that differs from its predecessors. We find in Sardis another condition, and one which answers to the general state of Protestantism after the Reformation. We have not so much open evil, like idolatry and the other horrors that have been described before; but now we have a more correct outward form and orthodox aspect of things. As the four churches in the second chapter follow on consecutively, and describe the state of things before the rise of Luther, &c., so Sardis describes what followed the Reformation, when the glow and fervor of truth and the first flush of blessing had passed away, and a cold formalism had set in.

The way in which the Lord presents Himself is wonderfully suitable. "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." (ver. 1). This is a new point of view in which to see Christ. In chap. 1. "the seven Spirits" were distinct from His person and connected with the throne. The seven Spirits of God refer to the Holy Spirit of God, viewed in His various perfections and the ways in which He works; and this not so much in the church, as towards the world. In chap. v., when the churches are done with, the Lord Jesus is described symbolically as a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth—the Holy Ghost as acting with a view to the government of the earth. It is not the Holy Ghost in all the fullness of the blessing into which He brought the Church in its unity, or dwelling there. It is the expression of the Spirit in fullness of quality and power to snake good God's will on earth.

But whatever might be the condition of the church, the Lord Jesus was the One who had all the power of the Spirit of God, and He only is the One who has at the same time full spiritual authority. There were no two things more separated than these at the time of the Reformation. There was then a large body calling itself the church, which claimed the power of settling everything, as being the spouse of Christ; and then the claim of infallibility was strongly advanced, because, of course, those who assume irresponsible authority as Christ's vicar to settle the affairs of the church, to define doctrine, &c., ought to be infallible. This body had wrought for ages, gathering influence for itself; and at last the struggle came, and it was proved to be a mass of the greatest evil against God and His Son that had ever been congregated on the earth. There might have been time saints of God in it at the worst of times, and I think that some, such as Cyprian, had even helped to give it an undue and false place of authority. Then, again, St. Bernard sanctioned the persecutions of the Waldenses. But it is well to bear in mind that there cannot be a greater fallacy than to abide in what is wrong merely because we find true saints of God there; for the great aim of Satan is to try and get good people to do bad things. When at last the crisis arrived, and men rose up in a considerable part of the world against this frightful evil, there was the separation of these two thoughts of ecclesiastical authority and spiritual power. Instead of its being a body that claimed both, everything ran into disorder, and men fell back on the power of the world, in order to gain freedom from the dominion of the pope.

Thus Protestantism was always wrong, ecclesiastically, from the very beginning, because it looked up to the civil ruler as the one in whose hand ecclesiastical authority was vested; so that if the church had been under popery the ruler of the world, the world now became, in Protestantism, the ruler of the church. It is not a question of church and state that politicians may discuss; but it is a great deal too narrow and low a question for a Christian. The great thing is to be in the path of Christ, giving honor to Him. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This describes the cold and formal ways of religion that were found after the Reformation among those that were not really Christians. The Lord Jesus shows what He disapproves of in Protestantism. Why not be thoroughly Christians? It was a poor thing to boast of not being as bad as Jezebel; it was death, if not abomination.

In Protestant lands, there has always been a measure of liberty of conscience. But the object of God is not merely to deliver either from gross evils, or from mere details, but that the soul should be right with God, and should allow the Lord to have His way and glory—liberty for the Lord to work by the Holy Ghost according to His will. When He is allowed His right place, there is the blessed fruit of it in love and holy liberty. It is not a human liberty derived from the power of the world that we want, (though God forbid that we should speak a word against the powers that be in their sphere,) but the liberty of the Holy Ghost. It is the sin of Christians to have put the powers that be in a false position. The Lord Jesus touches the root of the whole matter in the way in which He presents Himself to the church of Sardis. Whether it is spiritual power or the outward authority flowing from it, the Lord claims it all as belonging to Him. In Ephesus it was said that He held the seven stars in His right hand; but here are united the two things, inward spiritual power, and outward authority. He hath the Spirits of God and the stars. It is not said here that He holds the stars in His right hand, but that they are His, as well as the fullness of spiritual competency.

In the great mass of Protestant churches they gave up, as it were, the regulation of the stars into the hands of the powers that be. On the other hand, the persons who revolted from that fell into the sad evil of suffering the church to have the stars in its own keeping. There is not such a doctrine in the whole scripture as either the world or the church having this kind of authority in its own hands. The Lord Jesus has still all under Himself. He has not given it up. Therefore let the Church only own what He is, and He will act accordingly. When there is faith to look to Him in His place as Head of the Church, He will assuredly supply every need. If He listens to the simplest cry of His lambs, does He not enter into the deeper need of the church, which is always His most beloved object? He took His Headship of the church only in heavenly glory, and He went there not merely to be, but to act, as the Head. What is His function as Head of the Church? He exercises authority, having persons to act under Him here below. Thus the existence of rule and gift in the Church of God is the result; and these are not touched by the ruin of the Church. The Lord, anticipating the time when there would be a revolt from under the spurious authority of the body calling itself the church, and foreseeing all the confusion that would be the result, presents Himself as the One who is superior to it all. Whatever may be the condition of things here, strength is in Christ: and we can never find strength in looking at the condition of the church, but at Christ.

When the apostles were here below, they were empowered to act for Christ in a very special way; but when they were taken away, the real source of the power in which they had acted, subordinately to Christ, was not dried up; the Lord Jesus has it all in His own keeping still. There was a name to live, but real death. He was speaking of their condition as a body, and not as individuals. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die: for I have not found thy works perfect [filled up] before my God." Here we have again a very striking feature of what took place in Protestantism. In the desire to escape from the abuse of works by the Romish system, it is evident that its practice lost its due place in the minds of Christians—its place for those who have been brought nigh to God, for God does look for a real separate and distinct path to be taken by His people; and He finds fault with Sardis because of their failure in this. The saints of God, even in Thyatira, were commended of God for their earnestness, in spite of all the evil. Their last works were more than the first. Protestantism has weakened the idea of obedience, under the plea of "no perfection," either in the church or in the individual. Thus there has been a lowering of

the just criterion wherever Protestantism has prevailed: but our God looks for perfection as the standard His children should judge themselves by—I do not say attain. He has grace to meet failures; but it is quite another thing for persons to settle down in self-complacency, from not having the divine standard before their eyes. The Lord always goes back to this.

It is better, in seeking to have that standard before us, to fail in carrying it out, than to succeed ever so much, if we gave it up. For what does the Lord most value? The heart that wants to please Him. The child may come to its father and say, “See what a pretty thing I have been making;” but if the parent had told him to do something else, he would ask the child, “Is that what I desired you to do?” The Lord has His own will, which meets us in our first need as sinners awakened, and is the source of our very salvation. But it is far from the natural thought of the heart, which does not like subjection to another's will. It is but part of the lie of the enemy. The will of God was evidently that which accomplished our sanctification, through Him who said, “Lo, I come to do thy will.” In Rom. 10 the apostle puts our part of the matter in contrast with Jewish feeling. They thought, if they accomplished as much of the law as they could, that God was merciful, and would make up the rest; but the apostle shows that subjection to the righteousness of God is salvation. God's will is the very spring and power of our blessing, not only in the matter of forgiveness, but all the way through. Take God's ways in the church. These were subjects that were particularly neglected at the Reformation. Individual truth, such as justification by faith, was brought out forcibly and over a large field. But this was made the great point and aim of everything, and the consequence was, that people never knew thoroughly they were justified. The moment I make my own blessing the one or chief thing I am looking for in the Bible, I shall never know anything aright; but when God's thoughts and objects become my aim, I shall know directly that I am saved and blessed indeed. I cannot look at the cross of Christ without seeing, at the same time, my utter ruin, and my complete deliverance in the resurrection. If a man hesitates whether he is so very bad as God declares, he has to wait before he enjoys the riches of His grace; but if I trust myself unhesitatingly in God's hands, there is not a blessing that does not flow out to me. We find ourselves to be as bad or worse than Israel, and then we are brought inside a circle of goodness and mercy superior to anything they ever possessed.

At the Reformation, all this was comparatively lost sight of; and in escaping from the fearful net of Popery, they fell into the sin of putting church power into the hand of the civil magistrate. Others, again, who avoided this evil, made what they considered a true church to be the depository of this power; whereas it is Christ Himself still working by the Holy Ghost, that maintains His own lordship, a truth which is taught, at large, in the epistles. Supposing a person labors as a pastor or a teacher, from what authority is he to act? There was, indeed, human appointment of those who had to do with local matters; yet wherever it was a question simply of ministry in the word, there was no appointment from the first. Even in the case of choosing a successor to the vacant seat of Judas, the apostles did not themselves elect, but threw it out of their own hands into those of the Lord. (Acts 1) And when the Lord afterward chose another apostle, we find “one Ananias,” indeed, sent to baptize him, but there was no idea of that disciple, or any one else, making him an apostle. In what we have afterward (Acts 13) i.e. the case of hands being laid on the apostles Paul and Barnabas, it was not a bestowal of any orders or mission, for it was done by men inferior to themselves in point of spiritual gift and power, but was simply their brethren commending them to the Lord before they set out on a particular missionary tour to the Gentiles. We have a right to look for the Lord to maintain His authority in the church. In all ages, we find He was helping His blessed people, and doing His work by His servants. If a person wants to preach, he naturally thinks he must have the warrant of some authority; but if we seek an authority at all, we should have a competent one. Although there may be more respectability in the world, where these outward credentials, are looked for, the question rises, Has the Lord required authority to validate a person's preaching the gospel? The apostles did appoint elders and deacons; but these might be preachers and teacher, or they might not be: their being deacons was another thing altogether. Philip was a preacher of the gospel, but this depended upon his having a gift from the Christ as the head of the church, and not on his being one of “the seven.” Men have slipped into habitual departure from God's principles; and this is called “order,” because it is the most prevalent custom now in the professing church. And thus when we give up true principles, we get into wrong practice. The Lord attaches great importance to our owning Him as the One who has all power and authority in His own hands. The moment I own this, it so much the more binds my conscience. If I know a thing to be wrong, my conscience is held to it. I may not be able to see at once what is the right path to take; but to cease from what is evil is evidently the first step, and it is imperative.

The connection between the end of the second verse (“I have not found thy works perfect before God”) and what follows (“Remember therefore, how thou hast received and heard,” &c.) is to be remarked. He recalls them to what they had received from God Himself at the first. No such thought is allowed as that because things are not as they were then, therefore every church has a right to form its own laws. If it would be downright rebellion to say, because the Queen does not live in Ireland, that therefore the Irish people were at liberty to make what laws they pleased, it is as bad or worse if we think that, because things are changed, the apostles gone, and confusion come into the church, men are left free to desert the word of Christ and do their own wills: the Lord has left us His. The very word of God which tells me what I once was, but that I am washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God, this same portion enters into all questions of the assembly, and the working of the Holy Ghost in it by whom He will. (1 Cor.) There may be no tongues, or gifts of miracles, and healings; but is the Holy Ghost here? What He continues to do is according to the same principle and presence as at first, though in a very different measure of power, else we have no divine rule in these things.

Remark that the Lord's coming is spoken of just in the way it was threatened on the world (See 1 Thess. 5). “If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief,” &c. (ver. 3.) He would come upon them when they were not aware—suddenly and unwelcome. Had they not got into the world? Let them then beware of the portion of the world. If you have taken the world's ease, you must needs dread the world's judgment. Such is not the way in which the Lord speaks of His coming to the Church. In reality and all the extent of the words, it will be upon the professing mass, and not upon real believers, that the Lord will come as a thief. “But thou hast few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall he clothed in white raiment.” (Verses 4, 5.) The Lord brings in this suited comfort, that, as they had sought to act faithfully on earth, they should walk with Him in white. As they had walked in purity here below, they should appear in full justification of their ways before God above. But this is spoken of individually. The state of the Church as a whole was evidently low and worldly, and as such it should be judged. The moment a person ascertains that his association is contrary to the word, he should feel how grave that fact is, and consider what is due to the Lord. It might seem incredible, if one did not know the fact, that there have been and are men of God, guides of the flock, who not only abide in evil which they know, but seek to find a palliative in the circumstances of a righteous Asa or a godly Jehoshaphat, who nevertheless did not remove the high places. Alas! that the solemn revelations of God should be thus perverted so as to serve the ends of the enemy, and that a repeated warning should be tortured into a justification of sin. “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thy eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”

It is not enough to correct thoughts, and rest there; but if the Lord has given a judgment, is it not in order that the walk may be correspondent? Satan contrives to make the path of the Lord appear dark and sad; as he clothes a worldly course with the semblance of humility, order, and the like. But the word makes all plain now, as power will by and by even to the world.

May we walk with the Lord now, and surely we shall walk with Him in white hereafter! Instead of a blotted name, ours He will confess before His Father and the holy angels.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 3:7-22, Lectures on: Philadelphia

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

The tone of the epistle to Philadelphia must, I think, confirm the idea presented as to Sardis, that in this portion (Rev. 3) we have not so much the early church, or that of the middle ages, but what is found, or is developed, in modern times. Sardis is the beginning of this: a state of things not marked by flagrant evil, but by one sad and fatal characteristic—it is negative. Any fair persons, who have thought deeply on what is called Protestantism, must know that this is the sorrowful thing which we, who have been Protestants and thus share its shame, have to acknowledge. Men stand up too much, at least too self-complacently, for certain controversial points, which hide, in a great measure, their own wants and failures; they pride themselves on keeping apart from certain evils, such as the supremacy of the pope, the infallible authority of the church, the worship of the Virgin, saints, and angels, the doctrine of the mass, purgatory, &c. Supposing that there were all orthodoxy as to these, there might be a thousand evils of another character; and together with outward correctness, the heart be thoroughly away from the love and honor of the Lord. This is precisely what we saw in Sardis—a name to live, but yet dead. As in Israel, when the Lord was on earth, the old idolatry had passed away, the unclean spirit had left the house, and had not returned; so the swept and garnished condition of the house answers to that which follows the Reformation. But we must distinguish between that and the work which God gave the Reformers to do. Let none speak disparagingly of these men, whether Luther or others. But while God was working in that great movement, it would have been better and holier if they had left earthly governments to their own proper functions. No doubt, their patrons spared them persecutions and secured them honors, which, instead of helping God's work on, proved a great hindrance. And so, when the fervor of first zeal had passed away, the state of things corresponds with Sardis.

In Philadelphia, we have something totally different. The first thing that strikes us is not what the Lord does or has, but what the Lord is Himself. If there is anything that delivers from mere dogma, with all its chilling influences, it is, I apprehend, the person of the Lord appreciated in any special way. And this I see in the epistle to Philadelphia. The Lord here presents Himself personally more than in any other of these epistles. It is true He is said to have the key of David; but before anything appears about this, He says that He is the Holy One and the True. In the other epistles we do not find the Lord characterized in the same moral point of view. This is, in my opinion, what the Lord has been working in God's children during late years. The impulse given to evangelization by the spread of Bibles and missionary efforts has marked it outwardly; but inwardly the sense of ruin has been used of the Spirit to lead the saints to the word, and hence to a fuller appreciation of the person of Christ—the only object in which we can rest, through the Holy Ghost, as He was God the Father's when He walked on earth.

There is something very beautiful in the way in which the grace of the Lord operates, after the epistle to Sardis, which was in a dead worldly state Christ made Himself known; and He is the resurrection and the life. And what can give new life, put the church in its proper attitude, or bring a remnant to the walk and sentiments which become a time of ruin, but the Lord presenting Himself personally? This is characteristic of John's gospel; the person of Christ in His rights, not only humbling Himself to death, but baptizing with the Holy Ghost, in the activity of gracious power which is suitable to His glory. The first portion of it brings His person before us; the second, the other Comforter, whom the absent Lord was to send down from heaven. It is beautiful thus to see the place that John's gospel has in the scriptures of God. It was written very late, the last of all the gospels, and suited to a day of declension. There is no question of Jerusalem or of the Jews, as the immediate object of God, even in the way of testimony. They are noticed as a people outside, whom God has nothing to do with for the time. Hence the Lord speaks of the passover as a "feast of the Jews," Sc. In Matthew, on the contrary, there is the recognition of Israel for the truth of God. The boar out of the wood may waste, and the beast devour, but it is Israel's land still; and Jerusalem is called the holy city, even in connection with Christ's death and resurrection. In John all that is at an end. Not only had Jerusalem and the Jews forfeited all claim upon God, having departed from Him as Jehovah, and the law and the prophets, but they had rejected Christ; yea, and when the Holy Ghost came, they rejected Him too, and would not listen to Him any more; so that there was no resource. God had manifested Himself in every possible way. No manifestation of God, where man was under law, could do any good. Individuals laid hold of God's grace all through, but the nation was under law. The gospel of John starts from this point, that all was darkness, and there the True Light shines though the darkness comprehends it not. In Him was life. This ever remains true, though He may deal judicially here.

But to return to these churches. There had been declension from first love, suffering from heathen power, Satan tempting through the power of the world, Jezebel seducing to idolatry, and, in short, every kind of evil commerce with the world, with persecution. But now we find a modern state—outward cleanness, but the heart given up to itself. (See 2 Tim. 3) Sardis gives us this picture: some walking purely, but there was no such thing as the heart thoroughly subjected to the Lord. But will He be content with this? The Lord must raise up a witness for Himself; and the only way whereby He makes a person an adequate witness for Himself is by presenting Himself to the affections. The moment we see the Lord Himself, there is strength to serve Him with gladness.

Here the Lord, disgusted with the state of Sardis, comes, as it were, saying, "I want to have the heart—I must have it." He removes the veil, brought in through the sin of the professing Church. When they see that blessed One, so to speak, a little nearer, there is a state that answers (but oh! how feebly) to His desires for their heart, and it will be made good without fail, when we shall see Him as He is.

"Thou hast a little strength." It is not the way of God to produce great strength at a time of general ruin. At the era of the return from the Babylonish captivity, the Lord wrought in great grace. There was no outward power; on the contrary, they were so apparently contemptible, that it was the taunt of their enemies, that a fox could jump over their wall. But we find the same sort of spirit as in Philadelphia. They build

no fortification to keep out the Samaritans, (the Lord was a wall of fire round about them,) but the first thing they erect is an altar to Him. The Lord was the first object of their hearts. If He was their wall, they could afford to wait before building another. There was no such thing as the angel smiting the first-born, no miracle wrought on their behalf, not a word about plagues on their enemies; but "my Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not." Whenever Israel were afraid of their adversaries, they had no strength but in looking to the Lord, they forgot enemies. When we lean on Him now, it strikes more terror into the hearts of those who are against Him than anything else. When the heart is true to the Lord, that tells upon the conscience of others. What joy that the Lord's heart was towards them! It is this which produces proper feelings towards Him and towards one another. The very name of this Church is significant of the relationship which He had established; but it is also important to remember that it is a holy relationship we bear to one another. While it is certain that those who care for one another's heavenly interest will not be careless otherwise, still the Church is not a club, where men may be ready to help on each other, right or wrong. This would be Chartism or anything rather than the brotherhood of the Lord. The first words are the key to the whole. "He that is holy, he that is true (ver. 7)." Look at the first epistle of John. The expression is not often used about the Lord, but we find it there. In the second chapter of that epistle, speaking to the little ones of the family of God, it is written, "Ye have an unction from the HOLY One, and ye know all things." He that is holy, He that is true, has all for them. There might be weakness, but He has the key of David. In the genealogy of our Lord in Matthew, we find the expression, David "the king," not Solomon the king, or any other; because David is the person who first characterized royalty in Israel. He was the man according to God's own heart. And as for David walking in faith, no difficulties could stand in his way. True, the type was imperfect—no type is perfect, because it is not Christ, though it may be a witness of Him. We see the failure of the man; but where the power of God wrought in David what was bright, and blessed, and good, we have the germ, as it were, of that which we see fully in the Lord. The "key of David" represents administrative power, the means of access to whatever he possessed. Thus it is said, (Isa. 22) "the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open and none shall shut," &c. This was the consequence; he who had it had all things under his hand; and it was his business to take care of everything.

The Lord presents Himself as having the key of David. Therefore they ought not to look to the power of the world, nor to man; for if He had the key, it was the very thing they wanted. The energy of man might be at work all around, Jezebel, false prophets, &c.; but there was this Blessed One, the holy and true; and so much the more needed, because they were weak. They had so little strength that, perhaps, they could not even open the door, but He says that He had opened it for them; He had brought them into a large place where there was no such thing as bondage, or constraint. It is plain that the Lord is here market according to what He is personally and morally; not only as the great source of holiness and truth, but as the Holy One and the True. We find the latter also in the first epistle of John. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ;" but there he goes farther still, "this is the true God and eternal life" Thus, then, we have the Lord's person brought before them: it was what they coveted. They valued Christ. They wished to know more of Him; and He knew their heart. So it is said, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." They were tried of a mere form of godliness; they knew it was as possible to be lost or to dishonor the Lord in orthodoxy as in the world. They turn to the Lord, and He presents Himself as the Holy One and the True; not as against them, but full of tenderness and grace, putting before them an open door, and giving them the certainty that no man could shut it.

"Thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name (ver. 8)." Here we have three expressions concerning them. They are in a state not marked by outward note, or strength. Like Himself, they are unknown to the world, but they had kept His word; and more than this, they had not denied His name. Consider what it is to keep Christ's word. It is evident that there had been a departure from His word. It might have been circulated; but had it been cherished? Had it been loved and sought into, as for hid treasure? Was it for this thing that men met together to pray and read—that they might understand it better? What a movement in advance for the Church, where the Lord's person becomes more than ever the object, and the word as His word! It is not mere evangelization, blessed as that is in its place, and in its effect on the world. But here it is the inner circle of the saints who love, serve, adore Christ for Himself.

In this epistle we also find the great value of the name of the Lord Jesus. In 1 Cor. 1 The address is not to the Corinthians alone, but "to all who in every place call upon" that name. In other words, the first epistle to the Corinthians is in no way, more than the second, of private application, but for all Christians everywhere. In fact, the generalizing address is not put so strongly in any other; and this, perhaps, because the Spirit of God foresaw that, more than any other, it would be set aside. In these days, when there is no extraordinary manifestation of power, men might say, It is not for us, it belongs to a day that is bygone. True, there is no use to talk of regulating tongues, if you have not got them. But we have the Holy Ghost, and, blessed be God! the Church will never know the day when it will be without the Holy Ghost. Look at its darkest hour—the middle ages, Romanism, &c. The Holy Ghost was always there, not, indeed, justifying evil, or putting His seal upon disobedience, but He was there for the certainty of faith, according to the Lord's word, "He shall abide with you forever." The idea of looking for the Holy Ghost to be poured out again on us is utterly wrong. Such is the Jewish hope. For the church to make such a petition is, in effect, to deny that it is the Church. It may be well for us to throw ourselves down before the Lord, and own that we have acted as though we had it not. But let us bless God that we have the Spirit, not only dwelling in individuals, but binding us together for an habitation of God. The manifestation of this is broken, it is true, but the fact remains; just as we say of a man whose circumstances are bad, that he is a ruined man, while the man still exists. This gives us ground for humbling ourselves the more; that the Church had the Spirit and yet went wrong. Men might say, If we had a Pentecost now, and the Holy Ghost sent down again, we should go right; but the fact is, that when they had the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, they declined and fell. What God calls upon us to do is, not now to wait for fresh gifts of power, but to humble ourselves before Him, because we have gone, even as Christians, in the saddest opposition to His will. Alas! though the Holy Ghost dwelt there, one golden calf after another has been set up, till there is as much sin as was in Israel. This is what the Lord calls us to feel. The sympathies of the Philadelphian saints were with Him.

Clearly, then, what the Spirit presents is a despised but the word of Christ specially prized, and the Lord's name maintained: We have learned that the church is never bound to go on in sin. "Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." There may be moral iniquity and worldly lusts; and what is there so bad as church iniquity, except that which is against the person of Christ Himself? If a man goes on with things against the outward order of the church, it is evil, but not to be compared with sin against the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is always the worst, and the test of souls. The first of all duties is that the heart should be true to Christ. God looks for it.

Here, then, we see Christ bringing Himself out personally to the church, and this not with a general expression of love, but manifesting a special attachment of His heart to them. Hence it is said, "I have loved them." The Lord loves all His people, but it is equally true that He has special affections. There may be a peculiar link between Him and saints at particular times of danger and trial. His grace removes the hindrances and makes it to be enjoyed in its strength. They know His place in glory, but that which touches their hearts is that He loves them

in all that glory. His love the great basis and spring of their love.

"Thou hast a little strength." I know you are weak; but you have "kept my word and not denied my name," See here the personal link— "my word." "my name." The name of Christ, apprehended by the soul, is salvation. When the heart is brought down to submit to God's judgment of its sin, He Himself brings before that soul Christ's name; when it finds that it has no name in which to stand before God, He says, Here is a name, my Son's name. Faith supposes a man giving himself up as good for nothing, and saying, "God has been good to me, when I have been bad for Him." God has laid down this name as a foundation-stone for the poor sinner. It looks weak; it is called a "stumbling-stone," as it is to unbelief; but I ought to believe in it. If I merely look at the gospel, I am lost, because then I reason about it; but if I believe it, I am saved. What did Abraham do? He did not reason; he considered not his own body which was dead, but he gave glory to God. If he had felt strong, he might have given glory to himself. This is one practical aim that God works for, that we may know our own nothingness.

But is this the only use of Christ's name? No: He assembles round Himself. Jesus is the great object and attractive point to which the Holy Ghost gathers. Suppose it were the question of a person coming in, who holds what people call Calvinistic views, or Arminian, never having learned fully the ruin of man; you may say, "We don't like to be troubled." But the test is, what does the Lord say? Has He no power to judge that question? Has He delegated it to our discretion? The Lord has named His name over that saint, and I am therefore to receive him. Another comes and says, "I hear you receive all Christians; but I do not believe that Christ was exempt from the fall, either in His nature or in His relation to God." "No," I reply, "you cannot use the name of Christian to dishonor Christ." But wherever a man is found humbly confessing the name of the Lord (whether he be churchman or dissenter, that is not the point), we are bound to receive him. It is sorrowful that the Church should have these names of variance: they will all be at an end by and by. But we must not gainsay the name of the Lord now. The Lord's name is there, and that is a passport all over the Church. It is no question of joining us; indeed he is joined to us if joined to Christ. True, the Lord has His servants; but we do not acknowledge any one as a center in the church but Christ.

A further use of the name of the Lord is in discipline. What is the object of discipline? Not to keep up our character, but that His name should have its just place and honor, keeping it bright even where Satan's throne is. In the very camp of the enemy there is a name that cannot be put down. The Holy Ghost is there, not merely to give us comfort, but having delivered us from anxiety about our own sins, He leaves us free to care for Christ, and to serve Him. The question in the maintenance of discipline is, Is there departure from iniquity? The Lord never acknowledges anything as the church where iniquity is sanctioned. There is a difference between sin detected there, and the sanction of sin when detected. Any iniquity may break out: it did in the apostolic churches. The man was put away at Corinth because he was a Christian (as it is said, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus"). It might be thought, from the terrible nature of his sin, that he could not have been one. The Holy Ghost shows us thereby that if a Christian gets away from Christ, he is capable of anything except positively going against Christ Himself. From this I think the Holy Ghost would always keep; as in the case of Solomon's judgment, the false woman was determined at all events to have her half of the child, while the real mother would rather yield it than let its life be touched. But a Christian may fall into a cold state of feeling about Christ (unnatural as this may seem); and when in this state, so as not to have a just sense of the name of the Lord, what good can be got out of him? It was not so with the Philadelphian saints. They did not deny His name; and the Lord uses the tenderest expressions of love towards them. All ecclesiastical pretension, it has been well said, was against them. They were not looked on by those who said they were Jews. But He says of them, "I will make them come and worship before thy feet," &c. (Ver. 9.) They were in the midst of a great deal of profession that was hollow. But the Lord promises to vindicate them by His own power. What comfort there is in not seeking to vindicate ourselves, but in going on with the Lord!

It is of the utmost importance to see that the name of the Lord will never oblige a man to choose between two evils; and this is, in my judgment, what God has been pressing of late. There is a path without evil. Not that the flesh of man may not bring in evil; but if a man persists in any sin, you say he is not walking as a Christian; he cannot be owned as a Christian, though we may pray for him. Again, take a company of Christians. Evil comes in. I cannot say, "these are not Christians." No, but bring in the authority of the Lord's name to put the evil away. He having absolute authority, it is ours to take the place of full subjection to Him. The Church belongs to God. If it were ours, we might make our own rules; but woe be to the man that meddles with the Church of God, bringing in his own regulations! This was, it would seem, what was felt by these Philadelphians. They valued the authority of the name of the Lord. They avowed that they were weak, but they knew that the power of Christ was strong enough to keep them. Why should they be afraid? When Christians own His name as a gathering center, it is not said that evil will not come in; but looking to the power of the Lord Jesus and His Spirit, we do not mean to sanction evil. Let us only leave the door open for the Lord to come in. There may be much to try our patience; but what we have to do is to wait on the Lord. This is what the Lord seeks—that we should have confidence in what He is and has, taking the place of weakness and dependence in prayer, however much we may be tried.

It is of great interest to note here the re-appearance of the Catholic system at this point. It had developed first in its fullness in the era of early heathen persecution, under the fathers so called (the Smyrna period -compare chap. ii. 9.) Now, it comes up again, the enemy's counterfeit, the real antagonist of the testimony of God in our own day. But the Lord will compel them yet to recognize where the truth is, and where the Lord's approving love rests especially. "Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." (ver. 9.) These claimed to be exclusively the covenant people; others (in particular those meant by the assembly in Philadelphia) they regarded as outside, unworthy of a name save of contempt. For this it is which tries the saint, not persecution from open external enemies as also in Smyrna. The boasters in tradition, antiquity, priesthood, order, and ordinances, shall yet be forced to acknowledge those they despised as the beloved of the Lord. Fidelity to Him, however feeble, is precious in His eyes.

In Pergamos they kept His word: here they did more. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (ver. 10). In these churches the Lord evidently looks forward to a state of things up to the very close. It is plain that, as the hour of temptation is still future, room is left for the application of this promise to the end. This is not His word only but of His patience. Christ is coming to receive His Church, and afterward to be the Judge of all the earth. But we are not looking for signs. God will graciously give signs to the Jews, but the church was never called to be guided in its thoughts by what it saw (like Thomas). "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." It was when the Lord was no longer seen that the church was born into the world; and since then the church is waiting, but was never meant to depend on outward tokens. It was when He took His place above as Head, that His body, the church, was formed; for there could not be a body, except there were first a head. God would have the church waiting not for signs, but for Christ Himself. He will cause His voice to be heard, and the dead in Christ shall rise and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Christ is waiting for this patiently. As far

as I have noticed, the Lord does not speak about His coming as if there were any haste connected with it. He waits patiently for it. He lingers in His love, that there may be a lengthening of mercy to the world, and that souls may be brought to Him. The Church knows that He is waiting, and is called to the same patience—to have fellowship with Him in His patience.

“I will keep thee from the hour of temptation (ver. 10).” This is not the portion of the Jews. To them, when the time of trial comes, God says, “Come, my people, enter into thy chambers” (Isa. 26). Ours is the place of Abraham. He had not to fly to a little Zoar, like Lot who was saved indeed out of the judgment, but not much to his honor. The Lord had a heavenly-minded saint, as well as an earthly minded one. Abraham was not in the sphere of that temptation at all. So the Church will be kept from the coming hour. This is our confidence—not merely preserved in or through it, but “from” it. Take another figure—that of the deluge. Enoch had been preserved out of it altogether, while Noah was carried through the waters of the flood. Thus God gives us blessed witnesses from the beginning of this two-fold preservation, like Enoch and Abraham in spirit on the one hand, and on the other like Noah and Lot. These last were in the circumstances of the trial; and this will be the case with the converted remnant of Israel during the time of the dreadful judgments, The Christian's hope is to be with the Lord in heaven, and the church ought to be looking for it. And surely the cry is now going forth, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” I ask you have you gone out? There were those who not only believed when they heard the cry, but went out. Have you left everything that is contrary to Him?—what you know—not what I know—to be contrary to Him? I ask whether you are ready to meet Him. If so, you need not be afraid. Be assured that anything your poor will wants to keep is not worth the pains. It is gain to go out from all to meet Him; it is joy to be in the path of His sorrow. Has that cry reached your heart? Do not be content with saying, “I have got oil in my vessel, and it does not matter where I am.” This is selfish and unholy. The Lord grant that such may not be your feeling! He has saved me that I may think of Him. He wishes me to go out to meet Him—to value the precious hope of His coming. Are you then keeping His word? You know. This is a question between your own conscience and the Lord. When you have kept what you do know, you will learn more, and find it the truest liberty ever to serve Him “I am coming quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown (ver. 11).” This is a precious word. The Lord speaks of coming like a thief (as e. g. to Sardis, which had taken the world as its mistress, and allowed the unpurged world to have the place of the Lord). Here He comes as one that has a crown to give. The Lord Himself coming to meet us is the jewel He has given us to keep. The Lord grant us to hold it fast, that it be not taken from us!

We are indeed weak now, but the Lord says, “If you are content to be weak now, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God.” A pillar is the emblem of strength (that which supported the temple), contrasted with weakness It is a hard thing to be content to be weak. To flesh it is comfortable to feel the world's strength under one. But if willing to look what we are now, the Lord tells us what He will do for us then: “I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God (ver. 12).” As I have known My God, I will bring you into fellowship with Me. You were content to wait for My coming, and none shall take your crown. For those who have thought of Christ now, Christ will provide all the joy He can give them then. The Lord grant that this may be our comfort while we wait for Him! We may for Christ be outside all that looks strong and orderly. In that day we shall go no more out but enjoy the most intimate association with Christ, be a pillar in the temple of His God, and have the name of His God and of the city of His God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and His new name inscribed on us.

Weak as these were, they took the place of weakness; and as they had thought of His word and of His name, the Lord says, When I have you in my temple, I will write upon you “my new name,” and will make you a pillar “in the temple of my God.” He does not say the throne, which would be the expression of power, but the temple, which is another thought from the throne. The temple is the place of worship, where God is exalted in the beauty of holiness. Just so, when it was a question of the worship of God, David wears an ephod. His own wife despised him (she was looking at him as the son-in-law of her father Saul, the king) because he did not come out in some robe suitable to royalty: but David had the thought of God before him, and in his eyes it was his greatest possible exaltation to wear the ephod, and so to draw near to the Lord.

So in Philadelphia, they were specially those who entered into worship, because they appreciated the person and character of the Son of God. It is this that draws out the heart. Thus when Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of God (John 9), the blind man worshipped Him. This is very little entered into, even by real children of God. A man might receive favor from God, and give thanks to God for it, but might know little of worship. This is a higher step and nearer to the Lord. It does not merely appreciate the favors that come down to us from God, but what the God is who gives them. Real worship is always this. The Father seeks worshippers, but it is to draw them back to the source from which the grace has flowed. Not that the word worship is used in the address to Philadelphia (except in ver. 9, where it is in quite a different sense, merely signifying that the men, who were now scorers, would have to humble themselves and give honor to those whom they had despised). Worship is the drawing near to God in the appreciation not only of what He does, but of Himself. There is this that always prepares the way for worship—the full and simple knowledge of our being brought near to God, of the work of Christ and its blessed results for us.

Lectures on the Book of Revelation, Revelation 3:14-22, Lectures on: Laodicea

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Ver. 14-22. We have seen the strong contrast between the state of Sardis and the previous order of things. Gross corruption, open evil, persecution, hatred of the holiness and truth of God, false prophets had reigned in Thyatira, though there was a remnant found there, and a faithful remnant. If Thyatira represents the dark ages, when the Lord had His faithful saints hidden away in nooks and corners of the world, in Sardis we have a correct appearance of things—a name to live, and death almost universal; yet even in Sardis there were those who had not defiled their garments. If there is so marked a distinction between Sardis and Thyatira, there is an equally strong line of demarcation between Philadelphia and Laodicea.

“Unto the angel of the church in Laodicea,” not “of the Laodiceans.” (So as to Ephesus, it should be “the church in Ephesus.” Rev. 2:1.)

Let us look at the character that God gives of this church, and what He brings to light of its condition. If there are two churches that stand in more pointed contrast to one another, it is just these last two. The reason I think, is this; that when God works in any special way, when He puts forth His grace in some new form and light, it always, since the slipping aside of Christendom, draws in its train a peculiarly dark

shadow. So, here, Philadelphia was a bright picture. They were weak, but they were to be quite peaceful; for the Lord had opened the door, and He would keep it open. Christ was all their confidence in contrast with the pretentious religionists who appear at the same time, claiming to be the people of God with no care for Christ. The church should have been by the Holy Spirit a real testimony to the new creation of which Christ is both the only source and the bright exemplar. But it had wholly failed and never so much as in this last phase. But when we come to look at Laodicea, what a difference we find! There is no such thing as the Lord waiting upon their need, having the key of David, and presenting Himself as the object of their affections—as the holy and true One, in His moral grandeur, which called out all the heart to worship Him. But now He speaks in another tone. “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” There was an end of proud profession at hand. He was the “Amen,” the only securer of divine promise, the solitary “faithful and true witness,” when all else had failed. This presentation of Himself supposes that those to whom He was writing were utterly faithless and had revived the old things which had been buried in the grave of Christ.

Job was not in the presence of God when he was thinking so much about himself. (“When the ear heard me and the eye saw me,” &c.) We may say he was in the presence of himself and not of God. It is always a poor sign if we see a man stop to look at himself, whether his good or his bad self. The Lord does not want us to be dwelling on the change in ourselves. This is not to forget the things that are behind (which does not mean, by the way, our sins, but our progress). If the Lord has given us to take a step forward, it is that we may get nearer to Himself, and increase in the knowledge of God. Along with this there will always be increase in the knowledge of ourselves, but never in the way of self-admiration. As belonging to Christ, He is the object that happily keeps us low. When Job was really brought at the close into the presence of God, he was in the dust. He did not know what it was to be thoroughly worshipping God until he was brought there, when his eye saw Him. Before, he had been looking more at what God had produced in him, but now he saw himself to be nothing. After this we find him even praying for his friends, and we have burnt-offerings. This was the spirit of intercession, and worship too. It appears to me that such was the spirit into which the Philadelphian church had been brought. They understood worship, because they, in their measure, knew Him that was from the beginning. The Lord loves us to be strong in Christ, to be growing up into Him. In Laodicea there was no such thought—nothing like entering into the riches of the Lord's grace. There is nothing we ought to feel our lack in so much as in worship, just because we do value it. It is spiritual feeling, though feeble indeed, that makes us alive to our little power of worship. Be assured that the spirit of worship is our true power for service. Thus in John 10 the Lord says, “I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” It is no longer the Jewish sheepfold and the bondage of the law, but perfect liberty, going in for worship and out for service, everywhere finding food and blessing. How sweet to think that the time is coming when we shall go in never to come out again! It will be always service in immediate connection with the Lord Himself—enjoyment of the presence of God and of the Lamb—eternal worship. And let me again ask, for whom would this be a welcome and happy promise? For those who had valued and enjoyed worship here below; as in Psa. 84, “They shall be still praising thee.” The place where the Lord dwelt was graven even in the hearts of those going there “in whose heart are the ways.” They must get to the place where God was, and dwell there.

The Lord does not reveal Himself in the same personal and still less in an ecclesiastical way; but certain qualities and titles belonging to Him are taken up, which reach out from what He had been for God to that which links Him with the new scene in which He is about to be displayed as Head over all. This cannot fail. He was “the Amen,” the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. They had failed in everything—they had been unfaithful witnesses, and He as good as says to them, “You have not met a single thought of My heart. I will now present Myself to you as all you should have been.” He was also “the beginning of the creation of God.” (Ver. 14.) Christendom is at its beginning a rejected witness. Christ is in relationship with the new creation.

“I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot,” (Ver. 15.) This is latitudinarianism. It is not ignorance that makes a person latitudinarian, but the heart that remains indifferent to the truth, after the truth has been brought before it. Such an one does not want the truth, because he feels the sacrifice and the separation from the world, which must ensue if the truth be followed. We ought to bear, wherever there is unwilling simple-hearted ignorance; but indifference to truth is quite another thing, and hateful in the sight of the Lord.

Thus latitudinarianism is never the condition of souls that are simple-hearted but of those by whom the truth has been heard and who are not prepared for the cross. God's truth must put people's hearts to the test. It is not merely something I have to learn, but it proves me. If the sheep is in a healthy condition, it will hear the Shepherd's voice, and not even know the voice of strangers; but if the sheep departs after others, it becomes so confounded that it can scarce distinguish the Shepherd's voice. This arises in Laodicea, and, as it appears to me, from despising the testimony given in the former church. Laodicea is the fruit of the rejection of the testimony that formed Philadelphia. There He showed Himself, and to the heart that received Him He said, “As my name has been everything to you on the earth, so I will give to you My new name in time of glory. Every affection that has been true and blessed, that I have wrought in your hearts, shall come out more brightly in the glory.” To Laodicea He says, “Thou art neither cold nor hot.” They must have had some stimulant to warm them as it was not absolute cold. They were dishonest. Laodicea, is just the last state of things, which the Lord could not allow to go on any longer—a time when persons have had a great deal of truth in a certain fashion, but their hearts not touched by it. If the heart had been in ever so little a measure true, however ignorant, it would have enjoyed what had come from the Lord. In 1 John the persons who are said to have an unction from the Holy One and to know all things, are not the “fathers” (who of course had been thus anointed also) but “the babes.” The ability to judge what is not of Christ depends upon the heart being true to Him. Hence the youngest saint, if single-eyed, can discern with certainty, where the theologian is lost in endless genealogies.

Every spirit that lowers and denies Christ (the Christ of God) is of antichrist. There were, there are now many antichrists, and the place to look for them is where He has been named. If Christ had not been known, there could not have been an antichrist, which was the dark shadow that followed the truth. If we have the Lord at work in this gracious way, we have Satan working too. To be “lukewarm” was to be false, with the pretension of the truth; and the Lord says, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” There is not such a contemptuous expression used by Him anywhere else that I know. This is sensibly different from the dealing with Sardis, where the general judgment of Protestantism is given, judged like the world: the Lord comes as a thief. Is this the way that we measure things? We should have said probably that Jezebel was to be felt most about; but would it have struck us that to be lukewarm was the worst of all? But this was what drew forth all the Lord's indignation, and He only is wise.

“Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods,” &c. (Ver. 16.) Here is a plain proof that they had heard a great deal about the truth. They thought themselves rich. Learning and intellectualism in religion they counted a prize. If these grow (at least in extent, even

though not in depth), what ground for satisfaction? The spread of the outward knowledge of God is what hastens on the last crisis—God's final judgment and setting aside of all that bears His name falsely and self-complacently. They had sought man and the world, which promise much to the eye. But this is no righteous judgment; for nature thus allowed in the church is so much loss, to the utter exclusion of what is divine and heavenly—the real and bitter impoverishment unto all true riches. This the Lord proceeds next to lay before the angel.

Ver. 17. "And knowest not that thou art the wretched, and the miserable, and poor, and blind," &c. This was because they had rejected the testimony of God. His testimony always produces the sense of being nothing, but it never weakens confidence in Him. There may be tests,—the epistles of John are full of them; but there never is such a thing as the Spirit of God leading a person to doubt God's being for him. He may and surely will work in a person who is slipping aside from the Lord, to bring him back; He may make us feel our weakness; but it is not at all His way to produce a doubt in the soul; and it is ever a sign of the flesh being at work, "lusting against the Spirit," when we give way to distrust. The Spirit of God always, wherever He is, aims at making a man thoroughly humble himself, judging and renouncing the folly of the flesh. There is, and must be, reality, and earnestness, and truthfulness in the presence of God. "I am rich, and am become rich, and have need of nothing." But we have the Spirit of God pronouncing this to be carnal presumption, the heart knowing not its need, and refusing grace. There had been momentary warmth, which made it so hateful to God. But this is just what men are doing who talk about the church of the future. The early times they call the infancy of the church; afterward the church became a great naughty child: and now they are looking for a church of the future, when man will be no longer a subject, but will act for himself—will act like a man. Alas! where will not these aspirations end? for God will be left out of the so-called church altogether, and His authority got rid of.

This is working now extensively. And are God's children lukewarm about? about God's truth being shut out? Remember what the Lord here says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." It would be a gross mistake to suppose that there were no Christians among them. But it is not a question of individuals, but of the assembly, and as such the Lord said He would spue them out of His mouth. People cannot congregate in large masses without Laodiceanism as the result, if it be not also the spring. There is no such thing as great power of the Spirit of God gathering people together at the present time. The Lord be thanked if there are a few gathered out to His name! Let God's children remember that they must answer to the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are represented by Laodicea or not; whether they are standing for Christ, or for what merely bears the name of Christ, as a veil over indifferentism.

Yet the Lord does not give them up. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c. (Ver. 18.) Gold is used as the symbol of what is intrinsic righteousness in God's nature, or divine righteousness; and white raiment, or linen, stands for the righteousness of saints, as we see from chap. xix. Divine righteousness had slipped from their thoughts. They were neither appreciating the righteousness of God, which a Christian is made in Christ, nor the practical righteousness displayed before men, which the Spirit leads in. So He counsels them to buy of Him the true gold, and white raiment, that there might be the holiness that became them before others. "Anoint thine eye with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." There was the secret—the lack of unction from the Holy One. They did not see anything properly, not even their need of divine righteousness.

As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent." (Ver. 19.) Depend upon it that this is the Lord's voice for the present moment. Here, alas! it was what the Laodiceans needed. The Lord is dealing with His people: He constantly puts before them something to humble them in their thoughts of themselves: not telling them to do something or try something new, but calling them "to repent." He does not ask them to stretch their wings for some greater flight in the future, but to see where they are and to repent.

The call to repentance here, however, as in Sardis, differs greatly from that in the message to Ephesus and Pergamos, where all are thus urged, on penalty of the Lord's solemn chastening, whether general or special. Thyatira has here too an intermediate place: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." Hence the threat of judgment follows, and the vast change ensues in all its extent.

It is a far higher thing to suffer for Christ and with Christ, than to be doing something. When the Apostle Paul asks, "What shall I do?" The Lord answers, "I shall show thee what great things thou must suffer," &c. This is what the Lord specially prizes—not our sufferings as men, but sufferings for Christ.

Here they were persons, as sunken as they were proud, called upon to be zealous and repent; to humble themselves before God on account of their condition. The Lord brings out a gracious word too, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." (Ver. 20.) Yet it is a solemn thing that the Lord should be there, thus taking the place of one outside. Nevertheless, He was ready to come in where He found a soul true to him. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him," &c. Need it be said that this is not an address to the world for them to be saved? In John 10 the Lord presents Himself in full grace, saying, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," &c. But here He speaks thus to the Church. What a solemn position! How utterly fallen now! What ought to be the enjoyed portion of all the Church, whether in approaching God or in display before men, or in the communion of Christ, proffered in pure grace to him who hearkens and humbles himself before the grace of the Lord. He was One that had no sympathy with their self-satisfaction. He stood outside, knocking at the door, if perchance there should be a heart within, not too much occupied with the things and the persons around, that would open to Him. To such He says, "I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me." But it is all individual. If we saw a complete departure, are we to say, "there is no hope?" Not at all; there is the Lord standing at the door and knocking. There may not be many to answer His call, but some will; and the promise is, "to him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

It is a mistake to suppose that this is comparatively a glorious promise: we are apt to think so, because we naturally value display. But God does not estimate power the most. His holy love, proving itself divine most of all when Christ humbled Himself, in coming down to man and dying for him—that is the standard of value, rather than power or glory. He could make a thousand worlds with far more ease than He gave His Son to suffer. I do not question the grace of such a word, spite of such evil; but our sharing the kingdom with Christ is not the most blessed thing we shall enjoy. And the promise here does not go farther. What we have and shall have in Christ Himself is much more precious. Yet is this a portion with Christ. In John 17:23, the Lord shows that the display of glory is for the vindication of Himself before the world. All this disclosed glory in the future will be the proof to the world, that they might know that the Father loves us as He loved His Son. But we are entitled to know it by the Holy Ghost now. We do not wait till then to know the love that has given us the glory—a deeper thing than the appearing to the world, or thrones in the kingdom. The personal affection of the Lord to His people is a better portion than anything

displayed before men or angels.

Here the Lord closes the churches. He had got to the last phase. The wisdom of God has provided in these chapters not only His depth, but what requires conscience, rather than any great amount of intelligence to understand. What is needed is the eye fixed on Christ. Besides these epistles being a messenger to local churches in the name of John, we have seen in them a sketch of the whole history of the Church till the Lord comes. For properly speaking, not the Lord's addresses, but the churches themselves and their angels constitute "the things which are" (i.e., the actual state in John's day.) The addresses, while primarily connected with the facts then existing, go far beyond them, and reach out into a prolonged moral application, till there is no longer any recognized assembly, the last (though with mercy to individuals) having been summarily rejected as a public witness by the Lord. After that, we never hear of the churches any more upon the earth. On the contrary, the curtain drops, and we have a new scene altogether. The seer no longer turns round to see who spoke behind him on earth,¹ but hears the same voice above, whether he is now invited to ascend. The government of the world from the throne in heaven, its accompaniments and consequences, are the things which follow, when the Church's time-state is closed. After this we have individual saints both among the twelve tribes of Israel and out of all nations mentioned as such, but this only makes the contrast more striking. Henceforward, if specified at all, they are named as Jews and Gentiles, because there was no longer anything of the nature of the assembly of God upon earth: for the very meaning and essence of the Church is, that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, because all are one in Christ.

In the detail of these seven epistles, there is also abundant practical instruction. It is true, that the Spirit addressed them to the churches; but "he that hath an ear" is expressly enjoined to give heed; and this, to the challenges of the Lord sent to them all. Such application, however, falls more fittingly within the domain of ordinary ministry in the word.

It may be well, now that we have gone over the ground of the Apocalyptic epistles, to notice the objections urged against the larger view of their meaning by Bp. Newton. "Many contend, and among them such learned men as More and Vitringa, that the seven epistles are prophetic of so many successive periods and states of the church, from the beginning to the conclusion of all. But it doth not appear that there are, or were to be, seven periods of the church, neither more nor less; and no two men can agree in assigning the same periods. There are, likewise, in these epistles, several innate characters which were peculiar to the church of that age, and cannot be so well applied to the church of any other age. Besides other arguments, there is also this plain reason; the last state of the church is described in this very book as the most glorious of all, but in the last state in these epistles, that of Laodicea, the church is represented as 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.'" (Newton's Works, Vol. I., p. M9, Ed. 1782.)

Now it is clear that "it doth not appear" is rather an assumption than a proof. Why does it not appear?

Another might urge the same objection, and perhaps with quite as much weight, against the seven seals, trumpets, and vials. God has been pleased to specify in each of these instances seven salient points, so to speak, as His complete account of each. "The main subjects of this book," the Bishop had just before remarked, "are comprised of sevens, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials; as seven was also a mystical number throughout the Old Testament." If this answer satisfy as to the seven vials, why not as to the seven epistles? Doubtless, more spirituality may be required for right discernment in the latter than in the former case; because one series relates to external judgments in the world, whereas the other series takes cognizance of such remarkable spiritual conditions, good and bad, in the history of the Church, as it seemed good to the Lord to notice. Hence priori, one might be prepared for a greater divergence of judgment among Christians in their adaptation of Rev. 2; 3, than in their views of any other parts of the book. If there had been, therefore, a considerable measure of truth in what he says, the general principle would still remain undisturbed. But this is not the case. There is a striking agreement as regards the first three or four churches. This, of course, is not urged as in the least degree authoritative, but as a sufficient answer to the charge of hopeless discrepancy preferred by Bp. Newton. Retort would be easy on the discordant schemes of interpreting the seals, trumpets, and vials.

It is singular, however, that the Bishop bears testimony in the next page to the mystical meaning of the epistle to Smyrna. For the "tribulation ten days" is there explained of the greatest persecution that the primitive church ever endured, Diocletian's persecution, which lasted ten years, and grievously afflicted all the Eastern churches. Conscious that such an application, not in the promises attached, but in the body of the epistle, is fatal to his own exclusively literal application, the Bishop thereon allows that the "promissory or threatening part foretells something of their future condition," and asserts that "in this sense, and in no other, can these epistles be said to be prophetic" (p. 550).

But how stop here, once you own, as he does in the Smyrnan epistle, a bearing beyond the bare single church in or near that age, once you extend its scope to all the East, and its date to the beginning of the fourth century? Indeed, that fierce persecution was not confined to the East; for all the empire, not excepting Spain and Britain, was stained with Christian blood. If the principle is true in one epistle, why not in all? And, in fact was not general declension within as clearly marked in Ephesus, as persecution from without in Smyrna? and does not Pergamos portray the corrupting influences of worldly exaltation, as palpably as Thyatira sets forth the proud unrelenting false prophetess of Popery?

No doubt, the unsatisfactory character attached by our Lord to Sardis must be painful and startling to those whose eye is filled with ordinary Protestantism and its decent orthodoxy. And, perhaps, yet more distasteful is the sight of another and a subsequent testimony, which sets those who bear it in weakness and scorn outside the religious world, with the coming of Christ their blessed and animating hope.

But it is plain that the picture of the last assembly, in its deplorable lukewarmness, and the Lord's peremptory rejection of it, was the great difficulty to Bp. N., because of its inconsistency with his theory of the last state of the Church, "described in this very book, as the most glorious of all." But this is a total mistake. The Revelation never describes the Church on earth after Laodicea. The glorious description, to which the Bishop refers, is probably in Rev. 19-21, where the entire Church is glorified above. In a word, this reason is plainly invalid. The bride of the Lamb is to reign, but this does not contradict the solemn testimony of the Laodicean epistle, that the last state of Christendom here below is to be, like that of Israel before it, "worse than the first." The general testimony of the New Testament entirely confirms the witness borne by this particular part, as appears from Luke 17:26-37 Thess. 2:1-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter ii. iii.; 1 John 2:18; Jude 11-19.

The Coming Hour of Temptation, Coming Hour of Temptation, The: 2

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Let us apply these principles to what we have here before us. What originated the discourse? The admiration expressed by some of the disciples at the beautiful stones of that splendid and wonderful fabric which was then the special adornment of Jerusalem. But the Lord told them that every stone should be thrown down, not one be left upon another. Is this Christianity? It was Christ predicting the downfall of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of their temple. Does this overthrow any of our hopes? It has nothing to do with our place and relationships. It had a vast deal to do with Jewish feeling and thought and expectation.

The Lord accordingly gives first various general warnings which dealt with them as they then were. In the 15th verse He comes to something much more precise. He launches out into the circumstances that surround the end of the age, and says, addressing them naturally as representatives of those faithful Jews who should be in those days "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Who can be so bold (to say the least) as to affirm that this is a picture of the church at large? Do you suppose that Christians would ever be contemplated in the land of Judea alone? Clearly not. All is plain if He is speaking about Jews—godly ones no doubt, but Jews in that particular land. It is not at all a prophetic declaration as to the saints of God in different parts of the world. It is here nothing but a view of what would be in a future day in that land alone. We all understand that the mission of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations is to be from that land as from a center; but in verses 15, 16, etc., He speaks exclusively of those in that land. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Their flight was to be so immediate, that if a man was on the housetop, he was not to come down through the house; and if he was out, he was not to come back for what might seem ever so necessary.

I know there are many persons of old and to this day who apply this to the past siege of Jerusalem. But the proper prophecy of the past destruction of Jerusalem is a part of Luke 21, not Matt. 24. There our Lord speaks about Jerusalem as encompassed with armies; but there is no such sign as the setting up of the abomination of desolation, no such rapid flight called for; and, in point of fact, every one who knows history at all must know that there was neither one nor other as in Matthew, but exactly as Luke says in the past siege of Jerusalem. The Roman lieutenant who came and encompassed the city did not at all demand to be at once heeded after this peremptory sort. There were months that elapsed between the retirement of Cestius Gallus and the arrival of the still greater force under the emperor when the destruction of Jerusalem took place some years afterward. That is to say, there was plenty of time to get away, family, friends, baggage and all. There was no need, therefore, for so urgent a flight. All this is to me decisive, that our Lord did not in the first Gospel refer to the past historical siege of the city. There He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place." This, we have seen, is never once referred to in Luke 21; but another fact, as follows— "And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." There is not a word here about coming down from the housetop; not a word that forbids the man in the fields from coming back. In short, it is a different and more ordinary state of things, characterized as "the days of vengeance," etc, "great distress in the land and wrath upon this people," but not speaking of the tribulation, as Matthew and Mark do, and consequently without the citation from Daniel. The times of the Gentiles clearly run on after the siege in Luke, and as clearly not after the scenes of which Matthew and Mark speak. There is a flight enjoined, but no such instant flight as in Matthew. There is an analogy, and nothing more, between the past siege and the future of Jerusalem; but the past event, as Luke reports, admitted of a retreat from the city far more quietly, and with greater ease for their escape to Pella, etc. The future siege will demand a peremptory flight from Jerusalem, according to the word of God given by Matthew, who consequently (not Luke) speaks of the end of the age.

Coming back, then, to the earlier Gospel, the Lord says, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." We see that it is not a question of the world at large. The winter would not affect all the earth at the same time; what is winter in one place is summer in another. It is not a universal picture. Again, there is "the sabbath day." Everyone here, it is to be hoped, knows that such is not the name of the Lord's day. We as Christians very properly keep not the seventh day, but the first. A man who does not know thus much has a great deal to learn, it seems to me. Christians deny, and very rightly, that there would be any sin, in case of death, or sickness, or any peremptory call, to walk a mile and a half in order to do good to a neighbor, or to seek the blessing of an enemy. I suppose there are many here in this room who would feel perfectly ready to go twenty miles, if they could visit twenty sick persons in the course of a Lord's day. All Christians surely would not censure but value it. What do I infer from this? That the Lord is not speaking here of Christians at all. He contemplates godly Jews who are to be under the sabbatic law, and who would feel themselves in a grievous dilemma, therefore, if they had to flee on that day. He says to such, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter" (when inclemency might hinder), "neither on the sabbath day" (when legally their flight could not be permitted). Then He gives as the reason for all— "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The conclusion to be formed from these considerations is this, that our Lord was addressing the disciples as representing future godly Jews "every one that shall be found written in the book," not Jew as such simply, but the godly remnant of the last days, those that shall be delivered out of the final and awful tribulation. He is referring, in short, to the very same period as Jeremiah in his chapter 30, and as Daniel in his chapter 12. Our Lord makes this to be still more manifest, from the fact that He quotes from this very twelfth chapter of Daniel. If there could be any doubt about it here, we have His discourse again in the corresponding passage of Mark (chapter 13), where it is said, "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment." Thus we see Mark does not take up the same ground as Luke, but agrees with Matthew.

Remember, there is no discrepancy whatever. No more impudent belief can well be, than to set one part of the New Testament against another, or indeed any part of the Bible against another. Such a handling of scripture is not only dishonest, but profound ignorance. There is not in all the Bible one passage that really contradicts another. Of course, there are passages that may seem at variance; but then, as we begin to get a little more light, these diminish in their number; and hence modesty would feel, if there were but fuller light, all the appearances of inconsistency would vanish away. It is just the same thing in the moral world, nor is it otherwise in the natural world. There

are everywhere apparent contradictions and exceptions, but a larger knowledge of things bring these under a deeper rule. So it is with the word of God. Greater spiritual wisdom causes these apparent anomalies to disappear. Sometimes they may be in the translation; sometimes they may be in faulty manuscripts of the original; sometimes, and most frequently, they are in our own understanding. But the great lesson learned throughout is, that the Bible becomes more manifestly the word of God in its every detail. No doubt the more ignorant people are, the more fault they find with the Bible; the wiser they become, the more they rejoice in it, and bless God for it.

(Continued from page 192) (To be continued)

The Coming Hour of Temptation, Coming Hour of Temptation, The: 3

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

This being so, Matt. 24 and Mark 13 will be found to coalesce with the Old Testament texts we have weighed. All these scriptures suppose godly Jews to be involved in this unparalleled time of trouble, and that they are at the same time to be saved out of it. Thus far then the Old Testament and the New Testament clearly confirm each other. Every Christian man ought to accept this, even if not thus demonstrated; but I trust that what has been alleged may help to prove it in the face of gainsayers.

But this is not all. We come now to the Revelation, where we find a passage or two of a different nature. First of all is the one with which we began to-night: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." What have we here? Jacob? Daniel's people? Not a trace of them. Every one knows—it cannot be questioned—that the Lord Jesus is here writing a letter by His servant John to the angel of the Christian assembly or church in Philadelphia. Here at once we find ourselves on different ground. Jews are not addressed, nor is it by a Jewish prophet, either before or during the captivity. It is now the Lord Jesus, who has a double relation. He is the Messiah, the hope of Israel, but at the same time the Head of the church. I have already shown that in the passages of Matthew and Mark He is instructing His disciples as to Jewish expectations connected with the land of Judea and the temple. It is clear that they had the sabbath-day, and the number of arguments might be largely increased in proof that Jewish disciples in the latter day are referred to, and such only. But now we find none of this. In all the scriptures that concern the Jews, they are supposed to go through this hour of temptation, but at the same time they are to be saved out of it. They go through that hour; they are protected of God; but none the less are they in the temptation, although they survive it, protected by divine power. Here, contrariwise, when the address is to Christians, the word is, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." The Jews were far from keeping this; they had rejected Himself; they despised the word of His patience. But one of the great distinguishing features of the Christian is, that he suffers with Christ, and, more than this, that he is content to wait, as Christ waits, for the great day. He is not anxious for the glory of the world now; his portion is not here; the Christian is waiting, as becomes the bride, for the exaltation of the Bridegroom over the earth. The bride knows that the Bridegroom is exalted in heaven, and her heart is where her treasure is. Christ is glorified at the right hand of God; and her present joy is to know well that He who is her Bridegroom is coming, and that He will first gather to Himself His bride, and that in due time He will display His bride with Himself in glory. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." It is not merely that He shall take us away to be hidden in glory. He is hid in God now, and we shall be shortly. But when Christ appears in glory, those who are waiting, and are content to wait, keeping the word of His patience, will be displayed in the very same glory as the Lord Jesus. Such is the Christian's expectation. Christ is to come for us, and when Christ is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory.

Entirely falling in with this sketch of the difference between what a Jew expected and what we are now expecting, the Lord directs His servant to write thus to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." Christ is patiently waiting to come; He looks onward to the future as much in heaven as He did when He was on the earth. He has not left His manhood behind Him because He has risen from the grave; on the contrary, the resurrection is that which binds indissolubly His manhood with His person. He took manhood in His incarnation, but He has manhood bound up forever with His own eternal glory. As He retains manhood now in the glorified state, what a pledge this is of our blessedness with Christ when He comes again! We wait for that moment; and because we keep the word of His patience He says, "I also will keep thee," not from the tribulation only, but "from the hour of temptation (or trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Mark, He does not say, "I will keep thee from a certain place of trouble, or from a given sphere where the tribulation is to fall." We can understand that a man might be taken out of a particular locality under judgment. For instance, supposing Europe, or the Roman Empire, or the Holy Land, to be peculiarly the spot on which the tribulation is to fall, we can easily understand how persons outside the doomed limits would not suffer temptation in the same way. This has been a favorite theory; and I have heard of devotees who have gone east and west in order to get out of the scene of dreaded trial. But this is folly, and a total mistake as to the word of God. What the Lord Jesus says is not, "You are to go from the sphere," but "I will keep thee from the hour." Nay, it is a far greater promise, and infinitely more precise, than saying, "I will keep thee from the place of the temptation," etc. Those who keep the word of His patience are not to be there when the hour comes; that is to say, it is a complete removal (not only from the circle but) from the time of the trouble. The church of God will be exempt; the faithful will be kept from it. By the faithful I mean all the children of God.

I beseech all that are here to guard against certain and self-complacent notions opposed to this, and too widely spread in America, and sometimes nearer home. They will have it that such exemption is a reward for believing in pre-millenarian views, and that those Christians who are not so instructed are to pass through the future hour of trouble—some going so far as to teach that they will be in torture for 1,000 years. I beseech you, brethren, treat these notions as they deserve; treat them as bad and base, as altogether opposed to revelation, and the greatest dishonor both to the person of Jesus whom they love, and above all to His work, on which their souls rest before God. Oh, is not this idolizing knowledge? It would not become us, assuredly, to slight the study of prophetic truth in which we have found, if one may speak about ourselves, not a little profit and enjoyment. But at the same time to suppose that those who may love Christ quite as well as we do, but who do not hold just views on prophetic truth, are to be tortured for it so many years, perhaps a thousand years—to suppose God will punish His children thus because they have not been pre-millennialists, let such thoughts be utterly condemned and banished!

I admit that the Lord Jesus is said to come for them that look for Him; but why? Because the Spirit of God assumes that all Christians look for Him; and so they do. Some do it, no doubt, more intelligently than others; some, no doubt, do interpose their opinions on the millennium, as

well as others on the tribulation. I do not agree with either. I am sure that all such interferences with the constant hope of Christ are wrong; and men suffer loss through it. I believe that those who assume, contrary to scripture, that there is going to be a great and long reign of good over the earth before Jesus comes are under no small delusion. At the same time, while disapproving of that notion, I consider that the idea of torturing for a thousand years God's children, in order to punish them for not being pre-millennialists, is about as bad a notion as could be entertained by Christian men. I am not now speaking of those whose scheme directly lowers our Savior by clouding His Deity, or allowing the smallest spot of suspicion to rest upon His humanity or His relation to God, because one ought not to regard such as Christians at all. They cannot be acknowledged as such while anti-Christian. They may turn out Christians, carried away for a time, of course, just as a drunkard, or any other sinner. A person may fall into a desperate sin, and after all the Lord may bring him out of it. Neglect of prayer and of the word of God, tampering with the world, etc., may draw him into any evil, as grace can restore.

At the same time, if a man goes on in sin decidedly and deliberately, whatever you may hope and desire, you cannot, and ought not, to call him a Christian. It is the same with false doctrine: only I suppose that false doctrine is yet more evil and dangerous, because more deceptive than anything else; but no one can adequately judge of false doctrine, unless as taught by the Spirit of God.

This then may suffice to show how, so far as the Jews are concerned, the uniform testimony of the Old and the New Testaments is, that they are to go through this time of temptation, but that the godly ones are to be preserved. The word of our Lord Jesus in Rev. 3:10, is addressed clearly to Christian ears, representing the faithful that should be found waiting for His coming to receive them to Himself, which is the normal position of all Christians. Nor could the Spirit of God contemplate such an anomaly as those who loved Him not so looking for Him. This scripture holds out the blessed prospect of such association with Him as will exempt them from the time of predicted tribulation and the hour of temptation also. If I do not misunderstand the latter phrase it would seem to take in the preliminary sorrows, as well as later seductions and unparalleled final judgments. These do not all come at once. There will be deceits used as well as persecutions before the crash and the frightful crisis come. There is clearly defined in this very book a difference and progress in evil and trouble. This being so, the promise here given serves without constraint to comprehend and cover all, including the time of earlier trouble and deceit no less than the pressure of special affliction.

Accordingly the Lord declares that those that keep the word of His patience will be kept from that hour of temptation which shall come upon all the habitable world. And for what purpose is this hour sent? That others may be tried by it— “to try them that dwell upon the earth.” In the Epistle to the Philippians, the Holy Ghost brands the earthly-minded as being enemies of the cross of Christ, “whose end is destruction.” I hope no one will contend that this is said of a Christian, however it may be of those who had once taken that place. That a Christian may venture near the brink of evil, that he may tamper with the unclean thing, that he may be for a while drawn in more or less, is possible; but it is beyond dispute that the Spirit of God contemplates those who, professing the name of Christ, altogether abuse it; and their end is certainly and literally destruction.

(Continued from page 208) (To be continued)

The Coming Hour of Temptation, Coming Hour of Temptation, The: 4

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Here first, in the book of Revelation, the apostle John, at the command of our Lord, characterizes a class of persons who should be found just before the hour of temptation not only setting their minds upon earthly things, but if possible yet farther gone in that evil direction. They are called dwellers upon the earth. They had given up the blessed place of holy separateness as pilgrims and strangers in the world. Such is the uniform description of Christians; nay, in a measure, of the elders who obtained a good report by faith, as the Old Testament shows, although the light then vouchsafed was by no means so full as it is in the New. What intelligent soul would maintain that it was? If the Old Testament gave all the light needed now, where is the value and where the reason of the New? If it was the same thing, why not call it all the Old Testament? why the New Testament at all? The common faith of Christians knows this, if they do not frankly confess it. The one is divinely inspired no less than the other. There is no difference as to this; but there is the striking contrast that Israel's case is the history of a people under the law and government of God on the earth, while the church is a people led by faith out of all worldly connection to follow in the path of an earth-rejected Savior glorified in heaven, and to wait for His coming as those who know their portion with Him above. This is the calling of the Christian, properly speaking.

But whenever did God bring in a blessing without the enemy seeking to turn it to a corruption? If there had not been Christianity, there could not be Anti-christ. There is invariably with the light of God the shadow of the adversary. Accordingly scripture is most explicit that the falling away must come. The falling away from what? From Christianity, to be sure; and very likely from the divinely-inspired testimony in general—from that of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Nor do I conceive there will be long to wait for this. Time was when the only persons who used to attack the Bible were wicked men such as Bolingbroke and Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. Now, I am grieved to say, it is fashionable for clergymen—university professors, ecclesiastical dignitaries—to be infidels. God forbid that I should single out invidiously any one individual, or any one denomination, because it is easy to see that it is found in all the nations and tongues by which Christianity is at all professed. Skepticism is confined to no class, and is as rampant in Popery, though perhaps more open in Protestantism. Honest I can call it nowhere. It professes anything, while it believes nothing. The hard thing would be to say where it has not penetrated. Not that all are as boldly bad as Bishop Colenso; not that all are infidel after so cowardly a sort as the Oxford Essayists and Reviewers. But it is plain that the spirit of infidelity reigns in quarters that yesterday, one may say, would have been ashamed and horrified; and one of the most alarming signs is the powerlessness of Christendom in meeting it. I feel often that the answers to infidelity are only less infidel, if always less, than the assaults on the faith. Witness the address of Dr. Raleigh on religion and science to which the Congregational Union of London have committed themselves. I desire only to use such facts for the warning of those exposed and for humbling ourselves before God, while cleaving to the word of His grace.

The devil is now making people bolder in the highest places, as for a good while in the lowest. You may depend on it that it is mainly in the middle classes is found the chief value for the revealed truth of God at the present moment. The higher classes are largely saturated with infidelity; the lower classes no less so. In modern times it has been seen that God, while never unmindful of the poor, has most used people between the highest and the lowest to stand for the truth, and to reject error. I believe it is so still, and that the extremes of society are those that go most rapidly to ruin. While this is no doubt true, it is patent that the extremes are advancing rapidly to a moral meeting-place, and that the number of those who are thoroughly devoted to Christ, and who have perfect confidence in the truth of all that is written, is by no means large in any land whatsoever. We may be thankful for what the mercy of God has done in our own country, but I am persuaded that the inroads of infidelity become gigantic at this present time, and that the strides it is taking everywhere are as rapid as they are vast.

If this be so, it is a deeply important matter for us to be on our guard, and so much the more as the moment hastens when these things are about to be realized. Remember, I do not venture to say a word as to defining that moment. God may prolong His patience. Man is apt to be hasty in his thoughts. Just as he procrastinates in his duties, so is he apt to be precipitate in his expectations. It is unwarrantable for any man to predict the day which no one knows, says the Lord. God has kept all this in His own authority. At the same time there are moral intimations; and as none ought to be blind to the signs of the times, so the church of God ought pre-eminently to heed the tokens of what is coming—to read them in the word first, of course, and to seize their living counterpart in what is working round about us. It is not difficult to see that it is the tendency of the present moment to obliterate ancient landmarks—to cast down established distinctions, especially where there is a high or exclusive claim to revealed truth—to put all things divine and human on a common level.

However this may be, here we have the clear promise, held out by the Savior, of a people that are to be kept from the coming hour of temptation. Observe, it is not merely a question of the place of tribulation. From elsewhere it is clear that the center of the worst tribulation is to be Jerusalem. So true is this, that even if the godly but escape to the mountains, they are out of the area of that burning fiery furnace then seven times heated. This is certain from our Lord's own words. They may escape in a very short time to a place where the tribulation cannot fall upon them. Therefore it is evident that the unparalleled tribulation for the Jews can only have a very contracted sphere indeed. I shall show presently that there will be a larger sphere also. But in the message to the church in Philadelphia we have a distinct assurance of exemption, not merely from the place, but even from the hour; and this not of tribulation only, but of temptation, which takes in, if I mistake not, the preliminary troubles and seductions as well as the tribulation that comes as a scourge for such flagrant apostasy and rebellion. Thus the promise is of the largest character, and at the same time of the utmost precision. It is a positive certainty to those that really wait for Christ. It is not a question of a mere doctrine. If the heart be not toward Him, what more value in seeing the pre-millennial advent than anything else? It is obvious that there are a great many souls who have the doctrine clearly enough, of whom none can say that it does them much good after all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object of the soul, anything else is comparatively powerless; but where Christ is in the heart as one believed in and loved, and hence patiently waited for, then, no doubt, His coming is no less sweet than purifying. Everything is seen to be precious that directs to Him, and the word of God about Him. Where truth is held apart from Him, there will be nothing to soften the spirit—nothing to maintain liberty, obedience, and a sanctifying object. (Continued from page 224) (To be continued)

The Coming Hour of Temptation, Coming Hour of Temptation, The: 5

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

I am speaking, of course, not merely of being screened from the judgment, but of the power of salvation and of joy in the Lord now. Plainly this promise is most full, and it is at the same time no less precise as to the exemption of a people from this hour of temptation. Need it be added who these are? They are Christians, and none others. None but Christians were here addressed by our Lord. To them distinctly is the pledge made, that those who keep the word of His patience, the Lord will keep—not during, nor through, nor in, but—“from (or “out of”) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”; to try such as may have borne the Christian name, baptized persons, but their heart not in heaven, nor with Christ; earthly-minded, earthly-dwellers, spite of the true light and the revelation of glory in the face of Christ.

But this is not all. In Rev. 7 we have another word, and here we have, as is well known, “the great tribulation.” I am giving the critical reading; for remember, in cleaving firmly to scripture—and I do not see there is anything else worth contending for in this world—it is a duty to ascertain, wherever a various reading exists, what has the weightiest claims to be received as the true: we have no need to shut our eyes to any representative of the mind of God. In short, the purest state of the text must be sought as well as the most faithful version. To perpetuate a traditional blunder is not faith, but mere ignorance or obstinate superstition. Therefore I accept, and exhort all my brethren to accept, every help that God affords for the elucidation of His word. To this end every discovery of an ancient Biblical manuscript, every help toward a more accurate version that can be gathered from the study of the languages in which God wrote His word, is most valuable. I do not say that everybody ought to set up for a judge in these matters.

In fact, very few scholars, or even Christian scholars, have this sort of competency. It is easy enough to suggest changes of scripture, and supposed emendations of text and translations. We have all heard of 20,000 corrections collected by a diligent physician. It might be a wholesome check if any competent person dealt with that magazine of misapprehensions, as Bode did with the errors made by Mill and Bengel through trusting the Latin renderings of the old Oriental versions. What a tiny residue would come out from the subjection of the 20,000 to a really critical ordeal! In general you may dismiss at least nineteen out of every twenty supposed corrections of our authorized Bible. They are merely the crude guesses of tyros, the suggestions of such as may be scholars in profane Greek or Latin, but who possessed little or no familiarity with the Bible.

Again, it is monstrous for persons to sit in judgment on such matters, unless they do so as Christians. I deny that genius or scholarship will enable a man to understand aright either the Hebrew or the Greek scriptures. The best of scholars have made the grossest of mistakes here. Take Dr. Richard Bentley. Did not he and the like commit very painful blunders in scripture?

I admit the scholarship of the famous Master of Trinity in his own sphere. He was, no doubt, a man of very unusual power, and of the largest attainments in the remains of Greek and Roman letters; but then, as a rule, no man is at home outside his own business. I do not trust people who speak confidently on what they have not made their own. I value the simplest artisan in his own craft more than the ablest philosopher who prattles about it. No doubt, if a shoemaker were to talk of philosophy, he would not be likely to throw much light on the subject. He might be a genius, undoubtedly, and to this you must give ample weight; but still, in general, one could not expect that men outside their own proper functions would be the most competent to give an opinion of value on matters foreign to them.

On doctrine I hold the opinion of a scholar to weigh about as much as that of a shoemaker. Not only is erudition in itself of no account in spiritual things, but scholarship in one branch does not give competence in another. The Attic nicety, which appreciates, Sophocles, may be at fault before the abrupt passes and parentheses of the apostle Paul. But the first of all requisites, even for those familiar with Greek, for understanding the word of God is unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the sole power of comprehending and alone gives qualification to judge of divine things; and He dwells only in those who have faith in Christ. At the same time let none suppose that I exclude the use of every aid that can be brought in really and honestly to enable a Christian to read the word of God as closely as possible approaching its original form. It is, to my mind, a positive duty to welcome and apply every such help, let it come from what quarter it may.

To those who accept this principle there can be no doubt that the true reading here is "They which come out of the great tribulation." The omission of the article is wrong in the common text, and must be given in English to represent fairly the sense given by the best authorities. It is not always so; but it is needless to say that there are definite means of judging, and there is no question at all about its necessity here. To those who know these matters this is a ruled point, not without the effort of prejudice in some to resist the conclusion, but in vain. "These," said the elder to John, "are they which come out of the great tribulation." This is important, because if you read it simply "These are they which came out of great tribulation," many a Christian might say, "You and I have known great tribulation. This is a choice scripture, and it evidently applies to you and me." Alas! how often we are misled from the prime source of all mistakes—that is to say, interpreting the Bible by our own feelings, circumstances, and sphere. This is not the way to understand the word of God. You must look at it in connection with Christ, and not with self. Such is the only canon that will conduct a man in safety and light and joy right through the Bible by the grace of God; thus only can one be an intelligent disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Quite different is the way in which persons in general are apt to deal with the Bible; that is, they judge from their own things, and not from the things of Jesus Christ. Connect the word as well as facts with the Lord, and what a difference it makes! There may be Christians so unintelligent as to find in the Bible nothing but Christians and their enemies; but the man who reads scripture, looking at Christ, not at himself and his church, will say, "Well, there was once a people of Jehovah before the Christian and the church of God; the Lord had Israel then the object of His care, and they broke down utterly. Then He gave imperial authority to the Gentiles, and they turned it against Him, compelling the Jews, under pain of death, to worship their idols, and give up the true God. And now the Lord Jesus, having come, has been rejected by both; and having accomplished redemption, has sent out the gospel and set up the church; and what is the result?" We have before us in scripture the revelation of the end of all, and we have the working of these destructive principles in our own day. To leave room for all is of immense importance. It clears the way for understanding these and other scriptures. The fertile source of mistake is the desire to make all bear upon ourselves.

We have seen the Jewish portion; we have heard the promises to Christians; now we must be introduced to a third party. Nor is there the least reason why we should be in the dark about it; for in the latter half of Rev. 7 we read as follows: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

How many believers here and elsewhere I can hear asking if this be not a picture of the church. Let me assure you that it certainly is not so. With the utmost desire not to contradict any one flatly, we must feel that there are times when it is much better to be plain and short. I must therefore take the liberty of affirming that demonstrably a Gentile multitude is meant, and not the body of Christ, the church. The proofs are clear and decisive. Every intelligent reader of the book, whatever his view of its interpretation in other respects, agrees in this, that "the elders" and the "living creatures," one or other or both, are the symbol of the church in heaven. How then could one of these elders describe this multitude, if all, elders and Gentile multitude, formed part of the same church? How could the party described and the party describing be the same body? Surely they must set forth a quite distinct thing. The elders were seen long before the multitude.

The context too will make their difference still plainer; and this is not an unimportant key to understand scripture. Never take a passage without examining its context. What is its bearing here? A numbered multitude we first hear of from the twelve tribes of Israel. I know the fondness of many for what they call spiritualizing; but it is hard to spiritualize each of the twelve tribes of Israel; and the whole of these are brought before us distinctly and separately, as if on purpose to set aside such mysticising; for this is its true name and nature—not a spiritual but a mystical use of the scriptures. After the Holy Ghost has shown us the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of the twelve tribes, the prophet then sees an innumerable multitude of Gentiles, distinct from both the elders and the four living creatures. If the elders mean the heavenly redeemed in chapters 4, 5, I suppose they must mean the same body till the last chapter in which the symbol occurs (Rev. 19). Wherever they appear, do they not mean the same thing?

I here take the lowest ground. Is it not a fair inference that, if a symbol is found in different passages in the same book, it is to be taken in the same sense consistently? That is to say, if the elders are the glorified saints in one passage, they are the same in all passages. How then could this multitude of Gentiles be so any more than the multitude of Israel? In short, therefore, Rev. 7 shows us a numbered company of Israel, and then a countless crowd of Gentiles, separate from each other as well as from the elders, and characterized as coming out of the great tribulation. There is not the semblance of truth that these Gentiles are composed of the successive generations of God's people throughout different ages of the world. On the contrary, they are not supposed to be risen but alive; to the prophet's eye a number

numberless, gathered out by grace at a particular epoch, when the great tribulation comes here below. This, long known to a few scholars, is established now conclusively by the critical researches of all competent to speak, no matter what their bias.

And why should it seem incredible, or even strange, that God should begin to deal with Israel as such again? As to this, there really ought to be no question, if we believe the various scriptures read at the beginning of this discourse. And if God will keep them, why not the Gentiles too?

Nay, is it not certain that He means to bless the Gentiles as such? Is it asked what He purposes to do for the church of God? We have already seen about it. Those that keep the word of Christ's patience are promised to be taken out of the hour of trial, and those whose earthliness covers the Lord with their own shame are the persons on whom the severest judgments are destined to come. "The hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," does not mean simply Jews or Gentiles, but rather such as have professed the name of the Lord falsely. That true members of Christ's body will be left here below is an idea not only without foundation, but contrary to the clearest principles of truth, and to express statements of scripture. The evil servant and the foolish virgins mean not the true but the false.

(Continued from page 240) (To be continued)

The Coming Hour of Temptation, Coming Hour of Temptation, The: 6

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

(Concluded from page 255)

And let me add too another point of interest. We find in Rev. 12 one scripture more which gives a cause, and an occasion too, for this fearful time. All this needs to be duly taken into account. You are aware, no doubt, that the reason why the things of this world constantly appear to gain the victory over the truth, as far as what is bad triumphs, is the power of Satan, the great personal enemy of the Lord. Scripture affirms that the hour approaches when that power is about to be broken (not merely to faith, as ever since the death and resurrection of Christ, but) publicly in the world. Satan, according to the language of Rev. 12, will be cast out of heaven. From the seventh verse it is thus written, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Manifestly this is a state of things at which we are not yet arrived. It would be false doctrine and practically serious to say that such is the fact. A plain reason against it is, that Eph. 6 declares that the conflict in which the Christian is now engaged is with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, not with flesh and blood. As Israel had to fight with the Canaanites, so our special conflict is with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. Anybody who intelligently reads the Greek Testament will know, and even those who can inquire of those who do will hear it confirmed, that the expression ἐπουρανίους means not merely "high" but "heavenly" places. No matter where you examine elsewhere, it invariably means "heavenly places"; and, in point of fact, it never does bear the sense of "high" simply, nor do I believe it to be possible. Any man who knows the language will hardly deny that "high places" is a slip or an evasion. I suppose our translators did not know what to make of the passage. They may have supposed that it would sound strange to hear of wicked spirits in "heavenly places," and so they thought to tone it down or to obscure it a little, and so put in "high places."

However this may have been, it is far from my wish to fasten any unworthy motives on them.

They have erred occasionally, but were, many it not all, excellent men and able scholars, and I believe did their work with fidelity, though with a certain measure of hindrance, especially on the part of the king. We know he was superstitious on some points, and would not allow them to alter ecclesiastical terms which notoriously foster much misconception and prejudice. I do not mean to insinuate that James 1 had anything to do with the mistake alluded to in Eph. 6, nor does it particularly matter who it was that suggested or kept it up; but the fact is certain, that we are said by the Holy Spirit to battle "with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places," as Israel with blood and flesh (that is, their Canaanite enemies).

It is certain then that Satan has an astonishing facility of wiles to hinder Christians from enjoying their proper heavenly privileges; but we know that, subtle as he is, it will all speedily come to an end; and this is in part what is described in Rev. 12. It cannot come to an end as long as we are committed to the conflicts spoken of in Eph. 6. None but Apocalyptic dreamers could sustain such a thesis for an instant. For, observe, what we read here is, that when that crisis comes there will be "a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Has there ever been any time so striking for God's blessed intervention in the past history of the church that would answer to this? Is it really true that, when Constantine adopted Christianity, salvation came? Surely not. Who is so worldly-minded as to say this? Alas! such things have been said; but, after all, the idea only requires to be viewed in the light of scripture in order to feel that it is egregious and unfounded. To suppose that the downfall of Satan occurred in the fourth century, or that the coming of salvation was when Christendom began, or any such like scheme, is to draw largely on one's own fancy. Yet sober men, in other respects learned, sensible, and even godly, have put forth such views.

They were right good Protestants withal—a singular fact that Protestants should concede that in the days of many a dark superstition, afterward embodied in popery, salvation came, and the kingdom of our Lord and the authority of His Christ. But there is no incongruity too astonishing for the minds of men. However this may be, it is added that "The accuser of our brethren is cast down." At this point Satan will have lost the power of calumniating as well as of hindering the people of God. Hence the call to joy—"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." It is evident that there are dwellers in heaven then—saints who are no longer found here below on the earth—entirely

agreeing with what we have remarked elsewhere. But further: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." It is the time of great trouble; that is, the time of the unparalleled tribulation that has been already before our thoughts. Thus God will have accomplished His purpose of taking away men to be with Christ in heaven, having put away their sin and given them a nature capable of enjoying His own rest. They dwelt there in spirit when they were on earth; they looked to follow Christ to heaven when they were poor pilgrims here; they waited for Christ longingly, and they are at length to be with Him whom they loved. After this comes the downfall of Satan's power, and the putting forth of his wrath on earth for a short time. Who can pretend that this vast change has taken place? Surely if there had been a most fearful and unexampled raging of Satan here below, one would think that the world ought to know and feel it. It is a strange theory that such an immense change could have taken place without anybody being the wiser for it, and nobody particularly the worse. Be not deceived. The dread reality is yet to come. Accordingly we read of a tremendous persecution, and the rising up of the two beasts described in chapter 13.

There is no need to enter more into detail on this subject. I have endeavored to give a simple and unvarnished view of what the scriptures teach us of the hour of temptation as well as of the tribulation. It has been shown, I trust clearly, that the Jews are to be in the innermost circle of the trouble, though the godly are warned of the Lord to escape from it. Thus our Lord's words have the closest connection with the declaration of the prophet Jeremiah that, though so sorely tried, they are to be delivered; but how is not explained. Daniel mentions the intervention of Michael, but adds no more. Our Lord fully explains. He tells them that, when they see a certain sign, those in Judea must flee: what is that sign? The abomination of desolation. There need be no doubt what this means, according to analogy, a certain idol, the setting up of which in the sanctuary of Jerusalem will be the signal for the infliction of this unprecedented tribulation. An incident of the tribulation, or, at any rate, another element of trouble to man, and especially to Israel on earth, will be Satan's great wrath for a short time on his dejection from heaven. Antichrist will show himself openly; Satan will work by him, also by the great imperial power of the Roman empire, as he never did before; and God will send men a strong delusion, that they should believe what is false.

As men throughout Christendom will be misled deliberately and willfully to refuse the truth, God will allow evil to rise up beyond all precedent, and will let Satan have his destructive way, such of His people as are in Judea being saved from complete ruin by instant flight according to the word of the Lord. Jerusalem, therefore, is to be the center, not merely of the great tribulation, but of the greatest; as being guilty of abandoning law and gospel with Christ Himself, always resisting the Holy Ghost, as their fathers did, so shall fall there such retribution as never was. But the Gentiles, guilty in their measure, are not to escape the storm; they may not endure the worst of it, but they must taste the bitter fruit of their doings in "the great tribulation" of Rev. 7, whatever may be the grace of God in bringing out of it a countless throng to enjoy His tabernacle over them during the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus.

Thus God will cause a great and numberless crowd of Gentiles to come out of that tribulation as truly as He will save the godly Jews; but observe, not a word is said about the church in either. How are we to account for a silence otherwise so strange if the church were really there? If God bound Himself to save Jacob; if He is pledged to bring out a multitude of Gentiles, why not a word about the church? Nay, rather, how could He speak of His church then on earth; for you are aware that in the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile. One great feature of the church is the blotting out of such distinctions, and the formation of one new man, which is neither. Thus, whereas we were Jews or Gentiles before, we have put all this off, and as many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ. We are baptized into one body—the body of Christ—such is the inspired description of the Christian; so that we who receive the Holy Ghost now abandon our Gentilism or our Judaism, as the case may be. Thus the key is given clearly and at once. The elders will have been—at a moment kept silent in the Apocalypse—translated to heaven, and they are seen there before the trouble comes, not only before the fury of the tribulation bursts, but before the preliminary judgments of God on earlier evils, and the efforts of the devil to ensnare the saints by deceit, and draw them into the final apostasy.

As to this it seems to me that the general bearing of the word of God is abundantly plain, without pretending of course, to enter into every minute point. We are only learners; and a great joy it is to learn of God and in His own way. May the Lord bless the testimony of His truth, and give every Christian to have not the least anxiety, but to cherish perfect confidence in His word and Spirit! The Thessalonians were troubled by a misuse of prophecy. Mischievous men, who knew not at all the grace of God, troubled and shook their souls by a false apprehension of the day of the Lord—the day of judgment for living men on the earth. It is a total mistake to suppose that their delusion sprang from a too eager or enthusiastic hope of the coming of Christ. The mischief was, that their hope had been displaced and practically annulled by terror from false doctrine about the day. Excited hope was not the delusion, but dread, as if the day of the Lord was present. It was not wrong to believe that the day was at hand; but this is not what the false teachers insinuated, nor what the apostle reproves. Our English version, unfortunately, is exceedingly to be regretted here; and I appeal to every scholar with an unbiased mind whether ἐνέστηκε does not mean "is present" (contrasted often with merely being "at hand," and never really admitting of such a sense). They falsely taught, then, that the day of the Lord was actually come; and this was the delusion (for which they dared to allege a pretended letter of the apostle) that distressed the Thessalonian believers. 2 Thess. 2 dissipates the notion.

It is another instance of what our translators occasionally did. They could not make sense of the passage according to the plain meaning of the word, and so they ventured to do what no man ought to do; they gave up the real meaning of Scripture, and substituted another meaning, which they thought would make better sense, and must have been intended. Nobody is at liberty so to deal with God's word: it is not translating, but interpreting. Beloved friends, let us cleave to scripture, whether we understand it or not. If we do not, let us frankly confess our ignorance, but faithfully adhere to the words before us. What the Thessalonians were drawn into was the idea that the day of the Lord had already come. The false teachers seem to have construed the persecutions under which they were suffering as a proof that the day of the Lord was actually there. This the apostle treats as a falsehood, and the more as they claimed his authority for it. No one ought to listen to these men, nor were they to be troubled about such a rumor. He beseeches them, by their blessed hope of being gathered to the Lord at His coming, not to be frightened by the cry that the day was come.

Why indeed should a Christian be alarmed about anything? He is entitled to look death in the face, and to have boldness in the day of judgment, as John expressly says. And do you think that a man who can honestly and according to the truth and will of God thus contemplate the most solemn certainties of the eternal future should be justly alarmed at anything here below? A Jew or a Gentile ought to dread the tribulation if he faces the revelation of God about it ever so briefly; for the tribulation will be a retributive dealing with the unfaithfulness of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, and especially of those who abuse the name of the Lord. But for this very reason it does not apply to the

Christian at all. This is the moral truth of the case, and therefore I may well press it on all who have not duly weighed scripture as to it. I entreat you to cleave to the Lord's name and to His word. Value every help, and seek the best you can. If danger menaced your body, I daresay you would have recourse to those who, as you believe, could do you most good: I do not think you ought to do less, if the question is of your soul and God's own truth and glory.

May God bless you who believe, and give you hearts truly and humbly to cleave to Him and to the word of His grace, assured that He will exempt, according to His own word, those that keep the word of Christ's patience, and that He will also in the darkest days preserve Jews and Gentiles according to His word through the awful judgments that are coming upon the world.

W. K.

Courtesy of BibleTruthPublishers.com. Most likely this text has not been proofread. Any suggestions for spelling or punctuation corrections would be warmly received. Please email them to: BTPmail@bibletruthpublishers.com.

Philadelphia and Laodicea, Philadelphia and Laodicea: 1

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

My task now is to show that the Lord Jesus had something much more definite in His mind than the ordinary profit that one may and ought to derive from the word of God, which is written for every believer. For instance, what was written in the Epistle of James, or in those of Peter, or in the Epistle to the Hebrews, or in any other of the Epistles of the New Testament, is all of God. I need not say that the Christian believes that every part of them is divine; that every word of them is profitable, and so intrinsically for all days, if we have not all the elements that men possessed by the church at the time they were written. At that time there were outward powers manifested; there were persons in the highest position of authority for rule as well as in revelation of the truth; which thing we do not possess at the present time. And one presumes that all persons of sobriety would acknowledge this. There may be shades of difference, and some may claim more as perpetuated at the present time; but, among sober Christians who may differ as to other things except that which is fundamental, there is no question that the apostolic church did possess not a little that does not exist at present. But all that is needful for the edifying of Christ's body—for God's service and worship—we have assured here in scripture itself, with the certainty that it abides till we all come to the unity of the faith.

Now, I claim for the scripture which has been read something more precise; for the Lord was here contemplating such a scene as is unrolled before the eye at the present time. There is no doubt that the churches existed when the Lord told John to write to the angel of each; there is no doubt that instructions were given at that time for each church, as well as the whole book which connected them with a great deal that followed the Epistles. But the contents of these Epistles in themselves, and very particularly the character of the book, show that the Lord had a larger view than any ordinary thing that was realized in the day of the apostle John; for it is entirely unusual to present Epistles as here in prophecy. If the Lord was pleased to give certain Epistles as a preface to the great prophetic book of the New Testament, there was clearly a distinct object in it, and I believe that object was twofold: first, to meet existing wants in John's day (and no doubt, in that point of view Epistles were sent to each of them, according to the instructions given to the apostle); and, secondly, to make those Epistles to be a vehicle of the widest instruction for days that had yet to come to pass. But now they are come. And the Lord has brought out the light of them, when we read the closing scene of these seven churches. They were all there when He originally gave them messages; but now they have come into being in the prophetic point of view. There is, however, a division to be made among them, which is of much consequence to lay hold of; and this is, that the first three were not permanent states. They were passing ones. This is marked even outwardly by the fact that the call to hear changes its place at the fourth church.

But one need not go into this to demonstrate the character of the Epistles. All prove the same thing. For instance, mark the feature of the Epistle to the church at Ephesus. Of old it was a question of first love. This could only apply prophetically to the state of things which followed in the day of John, There never was a time when it could so aptly apply as then. They had the full grace and truth of the Lord brought out for them, and it they had abandoned, or were beginning to abandon. They were letting in waves of vain thoughts—doctrines soon after—which altogether weakened their sense of Christ's love, and therefore of their own love to Him. They were relaxing from their first love. Evidently, this could not apply in the same precise manner afterward as then, and for the simple reason, that far more serious evils came up before the mind of the Lord.

Take again the second—Smyrna. It is plain that the heathen persecution is referred to. We know that this followed, that prison and death were used as engines against the church a little after the early days.

In the Epistle to Pergamos too we have the church of God establishing itself in a public manner in the Roman Empire; that is dwelling, as it is said, where Satan's throne was. Now, this could only apply then, and once, while other things of a much more serious import would afterward call for the notice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do these admit of repetition? In fact, there was no such thing of the same character of persecution. There is a persecution of Babylon; but that is brought before us a much later part of the Book of Revelation. The old heathen persecution assuredly could not be repeated after there ceased to be heathens within the bosom of Christendom. So, again, the church getting established in the world was not a question after it was established. We find her acquiring a place, a settling down, on earth. Afterward much greater abominations were seen.

It is exactly at this point that the Lord makes a most strikingly new feature enter into these churches; and what makes it to be of so solemn an import for us is, that it is His account of the permanent conditions that follow. Thyatira is the first one; and the only or chief reason for entering into this now is to give a greater, definiteness to what one has to say about Philadelphia and Laodicea: I want to show it is not the mere application of these letters, or that they illustrate truth by the past. There is much more than that. In fact they apply chiefly to what I am going to spread before you for our own spiritual judgment. At least; such is my conviction. But the word must be mixed with faith if it be

really the mind of God to profit souls. It would not become me to speak so plainly and distinctly if I had not the firmest conviction, of the truth.

Thyatira is the first, then, in which there is the marked outward change referred to. But there is a more remarkable characteristic than the call to hear. It is here, for the first time, that we have the Lord distinctly bringing in His coming again. That is, the Lord intimates to these that the state goes on till He comes again. It is not so with the first three. With Ephesus, the only coming described is a providential coming, "or, else, I will come to thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place" and so with Pergamos, fighting with the sword of his mouth, but not His coming to receive the saints, nor yet to introduce His kingdom. Here it is in Thyatira for the first time; and, what is more, He introduces it in the body of the Epistle before the promise. See that which we have in the twenty-fifth verse of the second chapter: "That which ye have already hold fast till I come." The plain intimation is, that what He describes here goes on until He comes.

Now, this is evidently very much to be weighed, in order to have a sound judgment of these Epistles. When we look into that to Thyatira, it becomes still more manifest. Here we have that portentous personage Jezebel, the false prophetess. I do not mean that Thyatira is embodied in Jezebel; far from it. We shall find, on looking into it, there is a remarkable conjunction of opposites. In Thyatira both good and evil are brought together. But still here we have Jezebel. It is a, most apt figure of that Popery which, I have no doubt, is also brought before us in the symbol of Babylon given much later. Here she is presented as a false prophetess. We know how thoroughly this represents the character of Popery: that is, her pretension to continuous inspiration, a claim to pronounce the voice of God on whatever point may come before her, is really setting herself above the written word of God, as if she alone had His living voice. We know that such a procedure always does set aside what is written.

(To be continued.)

Philadelphia and Laodicea, Philadelphia and Laodicea: 2

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

It is not altogether a peculiarity of Rome to indulge in a self-assertion which enfeebles scripture; but in Rome it takes its most determined and most pronounced form. Here then, first of all, we have Jezebel: "Thou sufferest that woman, Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants." It is a striking fact that the Lord Jesus intimates that, in Thyatira, there were persons whom He characterized in the face of all drawbacks as "My servants." And so it has always been. Not a few, there is every reason to believe, who were God-fearing had a conscience about the word of God, with a love for the Savior, that never really left Romanism; while, at the same time, there was still plainer the fact that they were stupefied by the acceptance of fleshly unity, and by the doings of Jezebel. There was thus a most painful issue, the alliance of those that were the Lord's with a system which, in itself, was the most cruel enemy of those that He loved.

This, then, is the first thing here called to your notice. It is a picture of the Middle Ages. We find that, if the Lord had His servants there, Jezebel had children not only then but later. There is a perpetuation of the evil race—a continuance of the same character of persons. Then, thirdly, and this may go along with the rest, there is another distinct feature, only found in connection with Thyatira, namely, a remnant; that which must neither be confounded with Jezebel's children on the one hand—nor with His servants on the other. Surely this, is a very remarkable state of things. And what demands all your attention is, that it was found here only for the first time, while it continues up to the present, day. That is, you have what may be called the Romanizing or Ultramontane school, the Papistical party, thoroughly determined in carrying out the system to the uttermost—Jezebel and her children; next, those whom the Lord called "My servants," in the Middle Ages, such as St. Bernard, or, in later times, Pascal and Fenelon, if I may mention the names of such, down to M. Boos—saints who really had a moral abhorrence of what was enforced by Jezebel. Yet there they are, at the same time, all mixed up together.

But mark, contemporaneously, another party; which had its spring in those early times before Protestantism—the remnant or "the rest," mentioned in Thyatira, as it is said, "As many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak." Who are they? They are such, in my judgment, as the Waldenses, that is, a body of Christians who feared the Lord, though in ignorance, who lived before the days of the Reformation, yeti quite refused the wickedness of Rome, and who were, therefore, distinct from "My servants" found in and seduced by Rome. These rejected the overtures of the harlot, but, at the same time, they were more known for their practical godliness than for any clearness in the truth of God. They were exceedingly unintelligent, as we should call it. They but imperfectly understood even justification. Compared with the measure of the Reformation, they were far behind; and it is remarkable that they have remained ranch in the same state. They seem to have paid little attention to light from without, which is common in these days, of ours. Substantially they only retain their old attitude. They were, no doubt, undermined, abused, attacked by everything that either the power or wiles of Rome could do to destroy them. But there they abode in their secluded valleys, and there they are still, and I believe there they will remain till the Lord comes—not merging into Rome on the one hand, nor Protestantism, nor fuller light on the other. They retain the peculiar place, which they had even before the Reformation. Here, then, is the picture; and I ask, Is it not striking that from the first the Lord should have so sketched it out? There is nothing like it previously; and nothing like it in what follows. It began at that time and no other; and let us always remember that this state of things goes on till the Lord comes.

Then in the next Epistle, we have a wholly different character. There is the absence of all the revolting features that were found in Thyatira, or even in Pergamos. Pergamos was what we may call the Catholic system; Thyatira brought in, the Romanist. The first was the exaltation of the church in the world; it was what far and wide prevailed before the Pope set forth his aspiring and worst pretensions. The empire had become Christian in name long before. Thyatira, as we have seen, gives us the Roman system, but with these remarkable features which we have just endeavored to indicate as predicted by our Lord.

But here, in Sardis, we know nothing of the persecuting or idolatrous queen. There is rather what we may call outwardly a respectable orthodoxy. One can understand how this came to pass when energy failed: a name to live, while ready to die. Sardis indicates what came after the Reformation. The Spirit of God does not describe that wonderful work as far as it went, the power which, in various lands separated

souls from Rome. He gives us here the cold condition into which they settled down after form superseded the preaching of those stirring days: "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that were ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." And one understands readily why it was that death is so marked. It was the universal doctrine of all the Protestant bodies that, when souls are justified, they are put under the law as the rule to live by. Now, the necessary effect of this is the ministry of death, a most effective way to deal with a sinner to convince him of death. But the apostle, in the third chapter of 2 Corinthians sets forth a distinct contrast of the ministration of the Spirit, which is God's will about His people now, with the ministration of death under the law—that which was written and engraven on stones. As no man can deny this to be the law written by Moses, so he contrasts the two, and insists on it that the ministry, of the law has, its effect, death and condemnation.

Now the Lord here contemplates the result. It was indeed the inevitable effect of not going on, in the possession of life and acceptance of God, to walk in the Spirit as they lived in the Spirit. They attempted to embrace what was utterly incompatible; to put those born of God, and set free by His grace, on a common ground with the mass of men in all Protestant lands—that is, to bring in the whole population. Now the natural way in which this could be done was by the law; and the consequence was that, while the Lord might use the law in particular cases for the conviction of sin, the saints of God suffered irreparably. For the law provokes and condemns evil; it neither quickens, nor strengthens, nor justifies. Souls never enjoy settled peace; and the walk is as feeble as is the hold on God's grace. So He says: "I have not found thy works perfect." There was an incompleteness about them. The savor of Christ was not there, life in Him being little known any more than full redemption. In fact the law displaced the Holy Ghost. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." So the Lord threatens, because the Protestant bodies fell back on the power of the world. Every one of them sought the patronage of the great. There were not any of them above thinking there was a mighty influence for good where there was an acquisition of worldly authority. And hence, therefore, it is that they were threatened by the Lord with the judgment which is to fall by-and-by on the world. The Lord, in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, brings it before the saints that He will come as a thief in the night, but not on the saints of God—they are distinguished: Christians have a different position from the world. In 1 Thess. 5 He threatens the thief-like coming; and this is the very thing that is repeated here. I scarce know a more solemn thought than that Sardis, having accepted the world to govern itself in the things of God, has the Lord speaking of His coming as He threatens it on the world itself. If men choose the world's power how can they escape the world's judgment? Such a choice is the less excusable if they boast an open Bible; and this is the prospect of Protestantism. The bright hope of the church is wholly wanting.

(Continued from p. 276)

Philadelphia and Laodicea, Philadelphia and Laodicea: 3

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

But now we come to another thing. And if it has been shown that Thyatira affords us a prophetic picture of what would be in the Middle Ages, and Sardis of what followed the Reformation, let me ask you to weigh before God, beloved friends, what the Lord means by the new and most singular testimony that is implied in the message to the church at Philadelphia. It is entirely different, not only from Romanism, and from everything that is found connected with Romanism, but not less distinct from the picture of Protestantism. What does the Lord mean? What in fact does He characterize by it?

The first notable feature is Himself—His own person—and His own person judging according to the truth; His own self so revealed as to act practically, to insist on genuineness, to allow no longer a mere acknowledgment of truth that was not carried out. He will have moral reality. This is what I think the Lord intimates in saying: "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true; He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He looks after all.

And when did the Lord distinctly thus work in Christendom? When did He make His own feel how useless it is to acknowledge truth that we do not live? When did He thus recall His saints back to His word, and to own the power of the Holy Ghost in making that word living? Where is this found? We all know that there are those in Christendom that have set up for the Spirit of God without the word; and we are not ignorant of others who have set up for the word without the Spirit; and in both cases with results the most disastrous and withering. But where is it that the Lord has recalled His own to His word, insisting also on that sovereign place and liberty which is due to the Holy Ghost?

It is freely granted that there is another thing calculated to cause distrust in connection with this, among the children of God—namely, mere assertion of the rights of the Holy Ghost. And for this reason, that the Holy Ghost is here to glorify Christ; and, therefore, if it were but the revival of long lost privileges of the church, there is only partial recovery here. If it were people seeking to set up the church again on its own foundation, we ought to hesitate, not as if it were not a right desire; but it is hardly a becoming aim in the present state of things. Ought we not also to feel its sin and ruin?

Supposing a man were to receive, for instance, the truth of the church of God in all its fullness of privilege and power, do you think, blessed as this is, that this alone—where the recognition of the church of God filled his soul—would make him an adequate witness of God at this moment? Very far from it indeed; not because the thing itself is not trite, but because alone it would be accompanied by high thoughts and hard measures. It would inflate the soul, and be no better than an utterly impracticable theory, too, as far as that goes.

Beloved friends, there are two things necessary—real faith in what the church of God is, as God, made it; and, along with this, the sense of the utter ruin that has come in. For such is the state of soul that suits the man who feels he is part of the ruin as well as of the church. And how are these conditions produced? Not by looking at the church only, but at Christ. And this is the very thing that the Lord brings in here. It is the re-awakening of the heart to the place of Christ—to Christ as the Holy and the True. The effect then would be judgment of the present by the past—ah! how changed. Nothing is more needed than judgment of what man has made of it, by what God Himself set up in His own

incomparable grace. There will then be no pretension to recover; no thought of setting up what once was, or rather no attempt, on a little scale, at what once was in all its fullness. This would be a denial of the rain of the church.

No; there is a true path for faith; but it is a lowly one. There is a path that uses what God has given, what is imperishable and unchangeable—what God always makes to be the portion of faith. But then, it is in the sense of deep dishonor done to Him, and the going out of the heart to every member of that body, with the patient waiting for Christ's coming.

Now, the only way in which this is wrought in the soul is by looking not at the church or the Holy Ghost either, but at Christ. Hence you will observe here that He brings in no powers of the Spirit of God; it is "He that is holy, He that is true." I am sure there is a power deeper than miracles; but then it is a power that works morally. It is a power that effects self-judgment in the Christian, even as repentance is to the soul under conviction when being brought to God. "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." One may perfectly confide in His resources; He has got all under His hand. He opens; who shuts? He shuts: who opens? But the way in which He uses His power is to set before them the open door; and surely the man must be blind who does not own that it is precisely in this way that grace has been at work. Nor can one doubt that concurrently God has been working providentially in this way; for how often, while the Lord may exercise faith by difficulties, He also shows His own power by surmounting them all in a thousand different ways!

Thus there is nothing more ordinary in the way of God, than that He works in His own power providentially at the same time that the Holy Ghost; works morally. And so it is at this present time. There is the greatest possible indifferentism growing up, breaking down the barriers on all sides; and though man misuses grace for his own licentiousness, the Lord, in every sense of the word, sets before His saints an open door. It is not a question of preaching the gospel (one can understand the importance of it for the service of God); but the church does not preach any more than teach. We must not think of narrowing it to evangelization. In that respect there may be an open and an effectual door; but here it is an open door simply, by which one understands that the Lord makes clear the path in the midst of all obstacles—opening a way for what is for His own glory in the doing of His own will. Will any one maintain there ever was a moment since the church fell into disorder, when the Lord has made the "open door" a characteristic of His working so much as at the present moment? "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut, it." All mankind cannot open it; nor can all the power of Satan shut it. It is but for a little while. The Lord has opened the door to His people, and they are using it. They see the way clear before them, and they act on His grace. And the reason, too, is remarkable: "Thou hast a little strength." He does not say so to Sardis or Thyatira. They might boast outwardly. Not so Philadelphia. And anything that takes us out of our weakness, anything strong, is incompatible with the mind of the Lord at the present time. Whatever is a seeking of greatness in any one way does not suit the testimony of the Lord or the church's state. "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name."

I should like to put it to the conscience of any Christian person here, who doubts the soundness of what has been said, to answer me—Where do you find the word of Christ kept in any remarkable way? where do you find it treasured and carried out? One might ask even the enemies of the Bible, whoever they may be, where that word is heard and prized in a way comparatively unexampled? Would any one say—without wishing to utter a word in disrespect of the Wesleyan—would any one say that it stamps that society? I do not care to be personal, and shall not go round the compass of the different Protestant bodies; but we ask any person who has a conscience, and who knows the facts of what God has been working, where they find Christ's word really kept. You may tell me of the extension of missions, and of the conversion of souls; and I do not deny it. Would to God there were far more zeal in spreading the gospel in foreign parts, and seeking the conversion of souls at home! But one asks, Where is it that you find the characteristic so marked, that, the Lord Who weighs all could say of them, "Thou hast kept My word?" Where is the reproach of bibliolatry cast most, if we may put it in another form? Where in Edinburgh, or in any place whatever you home around you, is this stigma to be seen?

Remark, that our Lord is not here speaking of the old bodies of the Middle Ages—that is to say, of Thyatira. We must leave them behind: it is not among such; nor, again, in the Protestantism of Sardis. It is a new nation of God, distinct from both. Where will you find, then, those that love the Lord—disclaiming any kind of kindred in an ecclesiastical way, with Romanism and Protestantism—who are content with Christ in His moral glory, and characterized by keeping His word here below.

But there is another thing. They are described as not denying the power of that name—His name as a center. That name is one that must not be slighted. It is the resource for all difficulties from forgiving sin to the dealing with every kind of need. It is the only name of holy power; and, for this very reason, a name of unailing avail in dealing with what is contrary to God in the way of false doctrine or unholiness. Where is it that there are children of God who love to confide in it, to gather round it, knowing what it is to trust it? Where then must we look for those to whom the Lord says distinctively— "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name?" It is not for me to say where they are. It is for you to find them out. And may the Lord give you to prayerfully search before you settle the question! For you ought to know well that no one here wishes to urge anything that does not commend itself to the conscience of the children of God. Christ's word and name concern them most nearly; and He assuredly speaks of those who cleave to both.

I should not, on any consideration, be here to speak of a party interest, or some object of man upon earth. Such aims must be always low and unworthy of those that, having Christ for their life and righteousness, are looking for Him to come, and know He is coming quickly. But here is His intimation of a peculiar blessedness. Let it be yours and mine not to let slip this grace! Is this presumption? It is rather faith, which unbelief counts presumption. How much there is on the contrary to judge us in the words the Lord has addressed to us! I wish to show that these words concern you and every one of us here; and I cannot but say, that these words are either true of us as Christians, or they are not. If they are not, it is serious for us, for we are not in the current of what the Lord values most at this moment; if they are, blessed are we. Blessed are those that do the truth—wretched such as know and do it not.

But let us follow what He says: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Now it is remarkable that, at the very time when the Lord is making this special testimony, Satan has been forming counter testimonies. Take, for instances, the outbursts of Tractarianism, Irvingism, Mormonism, Christadelphianism, and I know not what—those enormous and frightful evils growing up so rank and luxuriant at this present time. What are they? Devices in order to bring discredit on the action of the Spirit of God according to the word. When the Lord is

thus calling out and forming for Himself according to His own glory, the enemy would distract by novelties, or keep fast in the darkness of antiquity. But even the stoutest of them shall be compelled to acknowledge— "I have loved thee." He will at length vindicate His own grace.

But turn we to the words, that follow: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth."

Now, I ask, how could such a promise affect a person looking for the progress of Christendom and the improvement of society, who was looking for all things to advance gradually, and improve on the whole? who thinks that the heathen are to be converted, and the present evils that afflict Christendom to be all expelled? Why, it would have no force at all. But take now the other side. To those who know that the hour is approaching—that hour of deceit as well as tribulation, who know that Satan is to be allowed a special power for a little season, who know that we are on the eve of what, when restraint is gone, will work both in a seductive and in a destructive way, how blessed to have His own voice saying, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience!" Christ's patience is sweet and good for the people that are despised and scorned. As He waits to come, so they wait for His coming. They have communion with Him about it.

Let me ask again, Where are those found that are, as a whole, waiting for the coming of the Lord? Wishing not to be invidious, I put it to the conscience of any intelligent person, even of those who are opponents, where are the Christians that, as a whole, ever look for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? That such are meant here, can scarce be denied. Do not imagine that great things are said of a particular position. It is a sorrowful fact, that those enjoying the most blessed privileges, if they prove unfaithful or turn aside, become the bitterest enemies. None will be keener to oppose. So it must be with a bad conscience, which has turned such away from what was once the deepest enjoyment. They affect to despise and deny what they once appreciated. It is the enemy which produces this fearful change. None become such restless antagonists of what the Lord is doing. No! it is somewhat to make good in faith, nothing to boast of. And the Lord says, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience" (remember it may be given up if not kept), "I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth." Thus, those who keep the word of His patience are a people not settled down on the earth, but who, unknown by the world as Christ was, desire to walk by faith and in grace, as becomes persons united to Him Who is heavenly. They are heavenly, and wait to bear His image shortly, purifying themselves as He is pure, But who would value this promise, except those keeping the word of His patience?

Mark the further words, "I come quickly." Blessed, indeed, is this for those that are waiting, for those that watch, for those that with joy welcome Him. Mark this also; it is only now, for the first time, so brought before any of these churches. Surely there is something significant in this fact: we have perhaps looked over these messages vaguely, and might have imagined it elsewhere. But here only it is thus. The Lord did give promises that referred to His coming, as for instance to Thyatira, and a solemn warning again to the church-world of Sardis. Here is quite another thing occurring, before the promise comes. And why so? Because it is a part of their spiritual life, and spring of their constant heavenly hope. The Lord, therefore, refers to it graciously as a thing that occupies their heart. He could not have given a word of sweeter comfort to those who enter into His patience. He says, (not, Behold) "I come quickly."

But there is another word: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." How little others understand your weakness and mine? Some are perhaps reputed so firm in convictions and ways, that it is useless to say a word to them. Oh! how little people believe that none require such sustenance of grace as those who are exposed to the difficulties we know every day. I should say, that if there are any apt to be swayed to and fro, and peculiarly open to be assailed by the enemy, if any exposed to danger in every shape, it is those who, abjuring forms, need the direct power of the Spirit of God to keep—in obedience and hope. Hence you can understand how needed is the admonition in the Lord's message, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

(Continued from p. 287.)

Philadelphia and Laodicea, Philadelphia and Laodicea: 4

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

Let me tell those, if there are any here, that know what it is to be separate to Christ in every-day walk, who, without setting up to be, we Philadelphians in the reality of faith, who really and humbly are standing on that ground, not merely in name and desire but in truth before God—let me say this to them: Trifle not with it, suppose not that you have got a lease in perpetuity, or that you have any such insurance as would preserve you against the wiles Satan is seeking to ensnare you by. I grant that the grace of the Lord has not called you out for nothing, and that He means to have a testimony kept alive till He comes. We believe there is now such a thing as Philadelphia, to go on till the Lord comes. If proud, you will be swept away; and if cherishing what is of flesh—what belongs to the objects of men, and not of Christ—you will learn, that, far from having prospered in such license, on the contrary this very thing will bring the judgment of the Lord on you. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The crown will be there, the crown is sure; but it does not follow that the same soul will have it. The men may change, but the crown will be conferred. For the Lord will set aside the haughty, and exalt the humble; and He can gather those who might seem far off—the very persons who will be found faithful when He comes to receive us to Himself

I therefore desire to submit my own conscience and heart to this test. I also press on you, believing it a most serious thing to flatter ourselves as to any position, simply because we are here, and happily so, as we have been mercifully kept hitherto. Let us remember that faith dries up when it ceases to be dependent on the Lord, and becomes an outward creedism. On the contrary, it is then a source of the most imminent danger. Let us rejoice, but go on in dependence on that grace which, having called us out, alone can keep us: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The Lord could easily set aside those who pique themselves on their knowledge, and form from the stones, to take their place, truer children of Abraham. Let us beware, lest in any way we presume on position instead of depending on Himself.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out." This seems contra-distinguished from the open door. It is supposed that there is a going out of heart now: assuredly a person whose heart does not go out in love is unworthy of the

Lord, and does not understand what He is calling him out for. For beyond question, one of its most distinctive qualities is this very thing, this open-door exercise of heart. It is not merely the entertaining and making use of what the Lord gives for yourselves; but as witnesses of His grace and truth, the heart going out towards all that are His, as well as towards those, who know Him not. It does not matter what their state of ignorance or need may be. Nay, to tell the truth, why should one mind persons who speak hardly of those they misapprehend? It is small on our part to think too much of it. The path of faith must be unintelligible to those who are outside it. How could such a place as this seriously interest the men of Sardis or Thyatira, or those of whom I have to speak in closing—Laodicea?

Holding in mind what I have said of those things, and of the forms in which the testimony, more or less according to God's mind, has been found in Christendom, beginning, one after the other, but continuing from Thyatira to the end, we see that it is an extremely serious thing for Laodicea. Do not suppose that Philadelphia turns into Laodicea. This is a false thought altogether. That there are persons who once in Philadelphia, become active in Laodicea, one can well believe. It must always be that the corruption of the best things is the worst. No doubt there is a moral link in that fearful collapse. The Lord takes Laodicea as compared with Philadelphia. There is a thorough contrast, and this in all points. But then it is not true that the one falls into the other. After Laodicea begins, they co-exist. It is to lose sight of what has been remarked, that they begin, like the rest, successively; but they are also contemporaneous states that go on till the Lord comes. So with Philadelphia and Laodicea.

But we, for a little, would look at Laodicea; and here we have what is more offensive than in Sardis, or even in Thyatira. There may not be that which looks so gross; and there is that which is truly doomed to destruction in Thyatira—Jezebel and her children for instance. This may not be so with Laodicea. But still there is a most repulsive character in Laodicea. With what exceeding disgust does not Christ mention it? I am anxious to show that this is the danger, the special danger, of the present moment. Christians in general do not go back to Sardis or Thyatira; but who will warrant against Laodicea? This is what we have to beware of. Laodicea is growing up rapidly. If Philadelphia is characterized as making the object in everything, here self-complacency and indifference to His glory govern. There is plenty of knowledge if not of truth; for there is a great difference between the two. They are rich, and increased with goods. Where did they get them? They were never given in the grace of God, but borrowed or stolen. They were truths that others had got fresh from God's word. Here they are used for man's exaltation, and hence quite apart from conscience, and so without Christ. They, therefore, minister to self-complacency, and soon produce painful results, yet a certain appearance which satisfies the mind. There is nothing new you can tell them: they know it already. Truth has no power, because Christ is not the object first of all, and knowledge is not used for His glory afterward.

And this is the reason why I think it is a destructive principle—the bringing of mere intelligence, as it is called, into the fore-ground, in the base of a soul that comes before us. In sober truth persons who make each a point of intelligence about souls do much to damage them. But more, can those who do so be really intelligent themselves? It is then unfortunate on both sides. For the truth of it is, that you cannot get true intelligence apart from obedience; and, if you could get it apparently, is it worth having? The only thing that seems to be desirable, or of the Spirit of God, is a little light acted upon leading on to more; and this, beloved friends, found in the place that is according to God. And, therefore, it is sorrowful indeed when undue moment is given to knowledge. Suppose a person is not in fellowship, and wants to understand all about the nature of the church before he comes, and it is thought he will not make a good brother unless he be first intelligent ecclesiastically, the whole principle seems false from beginning to end, a mere substitution of knowledge for Christ.

For according to my observation the best men who have grown up into the truth of God are those who, many of us can remember, were unintelligent enough when they came in; and the men who complain, are they intelligent now?

Supposing the case of Christians seeking fellowship; some may object to a sort of back bench for catechumens, whereas you want them to understand about the church and the Spirit before they are received: how are they to get this? What are they about and where, while it is to go on? Perhaps they feel a certain need of remembering the Lord, and they are accustomed to do so. But they must not yet be received! they are not intelligent enough, it appears. Are they meanwhile to drift into churches and chapels in order to get intelligence? Is not the whole notion in every way wrong, and, what is worst, contrary to the word of God. For it is plain that, for the most part, persons will not leave denominations unless they have a substantial ground of attraction in the Lord. For more you can hardly look at first. But there is enough in them to discern what is according to God; and far better act on Christ's title than keep them out shivering in the cold. Receive them and welcome them as members of the body, of Christ. Of course, there may be a question whether they are His, and there can scarce be too much care here; but it is in the true place, according to God, that truth is divinely learned. There may be value for Christ before, just enough to attract them; yet do not look for knowledge first, but fidelity to Christ. Be sure they know the Father.

Have you not known persons in fellowship, who talked exceedingly strongly of their ecclesiastical principle, yet let all principle go to the winds when something crossed their will? I have known tried and feeble souls who came in, attracted by the savor of Christ they found as nowhere else, and these grew up in the truth, and stood firm and true, whilst your intelligent persons fell away to nothing. Have no confidence in anything but the name of Christ. And when it is really Christ Himself, the grace and truth found in Him, it is found strongest, and ministers grace to the soul when acted on obediently.

Thus, it is a real evil to souls and far from Christ, when an undue place is given to intelligence. This is the material to build up Laodicea and not Philadelphia. "Rich and increased with goods," is exactly what results, and it is repulsive to the Lord, Who says, "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see." Is not this solemn? Where is now the place given to mere knowledge—not Christ, nor truth, but knowledge? These riches in the way of goods were acquired. There was a total absence of living truth, even as to the fundamentals of Christianity, so much so that people constantly apply this to unconverted men; and it looks like it. Gold, that is, divine righteousness, white raiment or practical righteousness, and eyesalve, the power of divine discernment, are the very things that ought to characterize simple Christian men from their start; but there is a total absence of the needful, and the Lord counsels them to buy.

There is more too. After mentioning His rebuke and chastening of those He loves, He calls them to be zealous and to repent, saying, "Behold I stand at the door." It is not now the open door but the shut one. "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." For the same reason, it is a text applied or misapplied rather in the preaching of the gospel. But this shows the widespread latitudinarianism which grows up through the misuse of Philadelphian testimony. It is, the state of things for people who are not satisfied with any Protestant body, nor perhaps with anything of the Catholic kind, but have not got the faith to go forth without the camp to Christ only, to keep His word, and not deny His name. They think they can get the truth without the cost, hate exclusivism, decry brethrenism, love nothingarianism, and keep a place of respectability in the world. Laodicea is the consequence, and the moral state that ensues on this is a total enfeebling—I will not say of the church, nor yet understanding of the heavenly glory of Christ but even—of God's gospel. Oh! is it not solemn? "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." So the very elements of what a sinful man wants for his soul is what these Laodiceans inflated with the idea of knowledge and privilege, need at the last; the Lord brings before them this humbling testimony. Such is the result of man's self-complacent misuse of the truth God gave in His grace.

Let us mark the closing scene: we are on the verge of it. Let us, therefore, look to the Lord, for I am persuaded there is very imminent and increasing danger. No doubt there is the blessed hope that He is coming, and coming quickly. There is the grace that keeps us, if we look to Christ as the object of our souls: there is no other which does not lead astray. And I would press this on you, that the very fact of our indulging in any confidence in position will be found, not only a total failure, but a delusion and a snare. The result will surely be that these things will not stand the day of trial—the fatal leap will be taken. Laodicea is the new title of neutrality or indifferentism growing up rapidly around us at this moment. There is on one side what is of man, on the other what is of God; and the Lord introduces all that and more in this most affecting picture of the end of Christendom. Oh! may there be grace and power to deliver, and set souls in perfect freedom to worship and serve Him. May the Lord give us, cleaving to Him, first and last in fellowship with His Son, also to be found simple and earnest in our desires to make known His name. If there are those who leave Philadelphia for Laodicea, there may be others gathered to Christ out of that which is most offensive and nauseous.

Courtesy of BibleTruthPublishers.com. Most likely this text has not been proofread. Any suggestions for spelling or punctuation corrections would be warmly received. Please email them to: BTPmail@bibletruthpublishers.com.

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Laodiceanism

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

"So repulsive does the Master declare it to be, that one need not wonder that most are unwilling for it to be their lot, or that it can be, as it is, the last recorded phase before the church is traced no more on earth. People vainly dream of progress, and flatter themselves. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot," etc. (vers. 15-18). They wanted everything that was characteristic of Christianity: 'gold,' or 'divine righteousness in Christ, that thou mayest be rich'; and 'white garments,' or the righteousness of saints, 'that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be manifested; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.' They had lost the perception of what God values. All was dark as to truth, and uncertain as to moral judgment. Holy separateness and savor were gone. 'As many as I dearly love, I rebuke and chasten,' etc. (vers. 19, 20). The Lord presents Himself even there in His pitiful way to meet their every want.

"He that overcometh," etc. (vers. 21, 22). The utmost promised in the word that closes the epistle goes not beyond reigning with Him. It is not anything special. For everyone that has part in the first resurrection reigns with Christ, as even shall the Jewish sufferers under earlier enemies (6:9), or later under the Beast (13:15; 20:4). It is a mistake therefore to suppose that it is a singular distinction. For all amounts to this, that the Lord will hold, after all, to His own truth in spite of unfaithfulness. There may be individual reality, even where the surroundings are miserably untoward. But all that are born of God and are Christ's share the kingdom."

W. K.

Bible Treasury: Volume N12, Hold Fast That Which Thou Hast

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

There is a striking coincidence in the facts of the word of God with the ways of God at this present moment. I daresay many have been struck with, and unable to account for, the circumstance—and I remember when it exercised my own mind many years ago—that God should have given such setting forth of His grace in the twenty-first of Numbers, when the children of Israel were nearing the end of their journey. I think that we should have more readily thought of it at the beginning. But God is always wise. We may be exercised. He may bring in apparently a difficulty; but a difficulty overcome by faith, in the mind of God, a difficulty that has long been uncertain, when once apprehended, what a gain it is, not merely to our own souls, but for others, as leading into fresh confidence in God and His word!

And truly the word of God is a mighty thing, not merely for us but for Him at this moment, a moment when Christendom is abandoning it, and when its leaders, blindly, I am sure, and not knowing what they do, are doing what they can to undermine it. His grace has caused that word to shine out in fresh power. For I speak not only of the beauty of the word, but of its authority; and this has a most weighty place. By it God Himself puts and keeps us in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would first ask, beloved brethren, whether we have not felt that which answers to it, that God has given the living power not merely of much in His word that we had not known, but also of fundamental truth that we knew imperfectly?

Has He not given us back again the gospel, and that which is the fruit of receiving it? Not that He has poured out the Holy Ghost again, as some have wrongly asked at His hand, but most assuredly He has given us back the truth of it again. I do not speak now of individuals. It has been very properly said, that when we are speaking of that which is the mind of the Lord, we must distinguish between that which is for His own glory and for the church at the present stage of it, and His special guidance and working in individual souls. It would hinder a little misunderstanding of thoughts very precious in themselves, but very capable of being misused.

It is the mind of the Lord at the present time to be forming and fashioning the church as the bride of Christ. It is His mind that we should be awaiting Him from heaven. But it would be a very grave mistake to substitute that which is His will for the individual, for that which is His mind for the church His body. It is the truth for us all—what the church should never have forgotten. But this does not in the least degree interfere with the particular work of the Spirit of God by each individual believer.

Therefore, whether in the fishing or the feeding [which we have had brought before us], servants have each their place—they in no wise supersede each other. When the heart is filled with Christ, the heart recovered to Himself personally, Himself as an Object before us, and Himself in His moral discerning power—for this is one of the most remarkable features of the way He reveals Himself to the church in Philadelphia—are the fishers to be less simple, earnest or devoted? is the feeding to be relaxed? The very opposite! There is a heavenly impulse given to it. There is also a freedom from excitement, a solidity and a separateness of character. Not a single want that is not met in the fullness of Christ. The love of Christ constrains.

Knowledge puffeth up, love buildeth up. You cannot separate love rightly from the truth. This personal revelation of the Lord Jesus at the present moment—this use of truth, not as putting something between us and the Lord, but putting away all that separates—is what we must all have found not only our deepest joy, but our best security.

Let me recall this word as a very solemn one. Do you think any are in such danger as the men of Philadelphia? I do not find that such a sifting goes on elsewhere. But I do not believe that Philadelphia is gone. I believe that Laodicea is come, but that Philadelphia is not gone, and will never go until the Lord Jesus comes; and that what He has set forth as a testimony, by revelation of His person, will never be rendered void. I do not believe that Philadelphia will go, but that the souls that fall short of attachment to Christ there revealing Himself, will go, and that grace will bring others to fill up more worthily their place. Assuredly the grace of God which began will keep those that have been there and go on with Christ.

But further, it may be well to observe that the most painful elements in the forming of Laodicea may well have had their place in Philadelphia, when faith failed and flesh gave place to Satan. But if they were in Philadelphia (or separation to Christ), they never were of it. They were such as never appreciated the testimony of Christ; for my heart fully goes along with our beloved brother in the thought of the Lord having a present mind.

I believe that, while something more has come in, we must not allow that which we have to slip from us, as it would if we were to get under the clouding depression that Philadelphia has so failed that there is no longer now anything of that character. I am saying this as a word of supplement. I believe this is on His mind, that those who are accounted of Philadelphia—surely not a mere question as to position but morally—do specially need His grace; for Satan uses all his arts to deceive and injure them. Where the heart is with Him, there He is all to the heart. But you have not Christ thus unless the Lord has led you back into understanding of what His church is to Himself. The most remarkable features of the appeal to Philadelphia suppose a knowledge of the truth and of grace found nowhere else. There must therefore be a very striking commentary within that Epistle. It is simply true. "Behold, I come quickly."

But we find that the Lord warns. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that none take thy crown." Do we not know, beloved friends, that never were men more liable to be carried away by feelings, and to be caught with novel teaching? People outside do not believe it; they think if you know one, you know all! We know a very different thing, and that as grace began the thing, so grace alone sustains and completes it. If any people are liable to be moved, we are. The very fact of being alone with Christ, away from the various means of occupying (I might say, of entertaining) the saints of God—for what else could I call the excitement of gathering thousands, with the attraction of music, etc.—makes us seem ungenial and ungracious in these days of exposure to the efforts of Satan in ways most trying and delusive. Let us cleave to the evident truth of the Lord. It is a caution given to Philadelphia more than to any other. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is hard for love to look unamiable; but Christ should be beyond all to us, and His love is alone true.

There are other reasons. This I would add: If you look back over what the Lord has been doing, you find that when souls do slip away, it is rarely into Sardis, still more rarely into Thyatira, but Laodicea is the common direction into which those who fall from Philadelphia gravitate; and there you have that which is most painful, nay, repulsive, to the Lord Jesus. Self-complacency of knowledge abounds, but Christ is outside the door. It is not lapsing from first love, it is far worse than that. It is indifference to Himself, with total lack of spiritual discernment. What state is farther from the mind of God?

Philadelphia, I believe, according to marks that, to my mind, are incontrovertible and sure, will be found when Christ comes. I believe that as Sardis does not supersede Thyatira; the state abides, but, through the infinite mercy of God, I see in Philadelphia the saints enter there as a question of Christ. It is not merely a true thing here or there known, but the truth bound up with Christ is apprehended, and there only presented morally and in love. Now, this is in no way boastful. There is no man that is led by the Spirit and enters into the mind of the Lord as regards the church but is ready not only to live for it, but to die for it; but Christ is nearer still, not merely this particular service or that rendered; though God has been recovering the cream of the gospel, and putting it in quite another fullness. Who does not know the controversy as to the righteousness of God? The heart of each of us owes much to the recovery of that truth at the end.

Another thing it is well to bear in mind, for it is important for God's glory as for the saints. Christ leaves room for all liberty and variety; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We must not set one thing up against another. Evangelizing is a special power, and the Lord calls upon us, as we are enabled, to spread the gospel, and not to teach only. We may be called to correct and be corrected, but our place, I

am persuaded, is one of freedom and responsibility in individual service. So the apostle, in exhorting Timothy as to the last days, bids him do "the work of an evangelist." Nor can any who are not evangelists duly enter into the feelings or appreciate the mode of that work.

"I have a few names even in Sardis"; and suppose any of these came; suppose they misunderstand those who do not happen to be in their own circle, and apt to be fault-finding is not captious, would it not be humbling for those who are blessed to be offended by their remarks? If the Lord has borne much from us in many ways, and yet has shown the fullness of His grace, brought out in the greatness of His love, we too are called to answer to His mind. And what is it? There are many saints that pine for a better knowledge of His truth, and desire to enjoy the presence of the Lord who is very dear to them. We know that whatever He may give to some in His abounding grace, the true way to enjoy His presence is according to His word, to be where saints gather to His name. There His Spirit works freely.

He says to the angel of Philadelphia, "Thou hast kept my word, and not denied my name." I should feel it was making His word of none effect if we allowed that there was the same enjoyment of the presence of the Lord where His name was not the center, and His word not maintained. He has brought out His truth in such activity that those who would follow Him fully now are called into the place of Philadelphia, to know Him who is holy, Him who is true, to hold fast His word, and not deny His name. Other things have come in. The most evil departure with good and bad together leads us in it. We would never forget that is what grows until Christ comes. We may let go that which we have! May we hold it fast! May it be true of us, "that no man take thy crown"!

The trials will be fierce and fresh. There are constant dangers and constant difficulties. Only one object keeps, as well as awakens, while in this world, and that is Christ. But there must be self-judgment, weighing truth and judging self solemnly, in order to communion. So only can we have Christ's power, in our weakness, resting on us. Who or what will make more complete shipwreck than the attempt to take up such truth as this in a mental way? Persons that seemed Philadelphians when they started, where are they now?

Yet I have no such thought as that Philadelphia will end before Christ comes, though individuals may come or vanish. It is precisely this which is so serious. We are on a ground where nothing can sustain us but the Christ who led us there. The word without the Spirit of God always ends in intellectualism, Sandemanianism, or rationalism; as the Spirit without Christ goes into fanaticism for a while, and fleshly form in the end.

What avails to offer the brightest visions possible of the church? Better have Christ with self-judgment. The grace toward the end of the journey teaches us how He recovers. The Lord at the beginning, and before the beginning of the church, gave us these very words: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst"! Did He not contemplate our need at the end? Faith in them and Him thus really forms Philadelphia. I do not believe that we shall be ever driven to isolation, though desire after union will never keep us together—nothing but the power of His name. There may be a thinning of numbers instead of that increase which some complain of. All but Christ will fail, no flesh shall glory in His presence.

There is another word, and a weighty one "The Spirit and the bride." The Holy Ghost has had His active presence and power confessed. It is a great thing to the Lord Jesus that the One sent down from heaven to glorify Him be owned, and this too in our proper nearness to Christ. It is not that He does not bless where this is not so. But there is an immense difference between those that are merely blest by preaching and prayer, and those that own the Spirit's presence and action in the assembly also. For my part I see in verse 10 an intimation that there will be the expression of it going on until the end. Saints will be together, and not breaking up into mere units— "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." I do not say that all that ought to have it, have really the intelligence of the place. But there are those who do cleave to Christ thus by the grace of God, who prize it above all things here, and that because it is the grace of Christ.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is the due answer to the voice of the Lord Jesus who is coming. It is His word that gives the ground to faith. Such His grace will keep; keeping together, too, those who have kept the word of His patience. Where He is, He not only produces liberty, but sense of unity. It would be a most painful thing, and disheartening to our faith, for those for whom the Lord had interposed—separating them to His name—if they must think that all that is found henceforth would be merely Laodicea. Let none think so. Sardis will go on to the end, and Thyatira. But it is solemn enough and searching truth for us, and for others, I repeat, that while Philadelphia is not gone, Laodicea has come!

If the worldly-minded slip into Laodicea, God is working to bring out of it also, and into Philadelphia, just as those who become more simply set for Christ must do. May our Lord, beloved brethren, both warn our souls, and at the same time encourage our hearts, for His name's sake. Amen.

W. K.

clickbible.org