The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 5 (Prophetic 2)

John Nelson Darby

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Notes On The Apocalypse

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Chapter 1

The first eight verses serve as an introduction to the whole book. It is profitable, and throws light on the Apocalypse itself, to examine the peculiar character of the book, and the manner in which Jesus reveals Himself in it. There is a special blessing attached to the reading of this book (chap. 1:3; 22:7). It is a practical thing. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.”

Nothing is of more importance. The prophecies of the Old Testament strengthened the Jews in their relationship with God, and attached them to His government. Although God permits men to go their own way, led by their own passions, yet He never did, nor ever will, entirely give up the reins of government as to this world. This is what the Apocalypse shews us. All things work together for the glory of Jesus. We see in Hebrews 11:7 the effects of prophecy on faith. The faith of Abel recognises the sacrifice; Enoch walks with God. The faith of Noah condemns the world; it was not limited to the recognition of the efficacy of the sacrifice and walking with God; but Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet, and, separated in walk from the world by this warning, became heir of the righteousness which is by faith, and condemned the world. The world put to death Jesus the heir. The church, warned of God of what is about to come to pass, knows that man in

rebellion against God has no title to the inheritance of the world. The church in its suffering state does not possess it.

Christ is presented to us in the Apocalypse as the heir of the world. The church, like Noah, condemns the world, of which she is co-heir with Christ.

God is not presented as Father in the Apocalypse; this gives the character of the book. When the glory of the inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:17, 18) is treated of, Christ is presented as Man; and God, as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 3:14, where the communion of the Father and of the Son is in question, He is presented as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Apocalypse, God is presented as the God who governs the world; whereas when it is the church that is in question, He is called Father. Moreover, in the Apocalypse, the subject is (not what relates to His connection with the church, but) the world, and its connection with God as Governor of the world.

In chapter I Christ is presented as man, but in glory. The communication is by an angel—not by the Spirit of revelation and of communion, making the church to enjoy the glory and fellowship with the Father and with the Son. There is a great difference between what is communicated to the church and what has the church for its subject. When the church is addressed as to what concerns herself, she is addressed accord-ng to the presence of the Spirit which puts her in communion with the Father and the Son as the church, as the family. God communicated to Abraham what concerned Sodom, so to the church what concerns the world.

Verse 1. A revelation is made to Jesus, and He communicates it to John by an angel.2 It is prophecy, the testimony of Jesus (i.e., that which He gives Himself), and the word of God. The difference between the testimony of Jesus and the testimony to Jesus is of some importance in this book. It is often said that the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus; so that those who should receive that alone, and have nothing more, have the testimony of Jesus, and the word of God. In this verse the learned agree to read, not the testimony of Jesus Christ, “and of all things that he saw,” but “the testimony of Jesus Christ [viz.] all things that he saw”; that is to say, the visions in the Apocalypse themselves form the testimony. This prophecy is, first, the word of God; secondly, the testimony of Jesus Christ; thirdly, a vision— “all things he saw.”

Verse 3. “For the time is at hand.” Those things are not fulfilled. The thought of the return of Jesus was so present that the disciples thought John would not die before His coming. John closed revelation.

Malachi closed the Old Testament by the promise of Elijah. From that time all is apocryphal. There is no new revelation or communications made that would constitute the proof of a recognised relationship. So the Apocalypse, which closes the New Testament revelation, announces the coming of Jesus, and all is apocryphal until the Lord comes to receive the church.3 God does not, in the interval, give up His people; but He makes no more revelations. Therefore He says “the time is at hand.” Thus the apostles speak of their time as being the last days. All the interval until the return of Jesus is the longsuffering of God towards the world. The church is to walk by faith, and by the revelation already given.

Verse 4. John addresses directly the seven churches.

The salutation agrees with the character of the book. God presents Himself as the Eternal, as the One who reigns and rules. The Spirit is presented in a manner exterior to the relations of God with the church, as a spirit of wisdom and of light. It is the Spirit in His attributes of power and of perfection, the accomplisher of the divine will in the world. Moreover, Jesus is not presented here as the Head of the church in heaven, but as the faithful Witness, as risen, and as Prince of the kings of the earth.

Verse 6. It is the church who receives the revelation and who answers, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us to God and-his Father kings and priests, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” The church cannot forget the love of which she has been the object; and she expresses her own relation to God in the scene which is about to be disclosed. Jesus is placed last (v. 4, 5) because He is one who communicates with the earth and whose of right it all is.

God is on the throne, the Spirit is before the throne, and Jesus is in connection with the earth. This is the object of the book. It is not the church which is here in the thoughts of God; she receives the communication of them. Jesus has, in spite of Saltan, title to the inheritance of the world; and He lets the church into the knowledge of His counsels before the thing takes place. God communicates to Abraham what He is going to do to Sodom; and here, to the church, what He is going to do to the world, in order that the church may remain apart from all that system that leads to judgment.

Verse 7. “Behold, he cometh with clouds.” This verse passes on to that which establishes His relation with the world, the Jews included. That is the principal thought, the great subject of revelation here. The present dispensation is a dispensation of faith. The church has not seen Jesus risen; she has only seen the witnesses of His resurrection, and she must believe it on their testimony. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,” John 20:29. Such is the principle on which the believer walks in the present dispensation. “Every eye shall see him” (not those only who believe); that is the character of the coming dispensation.

Verse 8. God introduces Himself, after the manifestation of Jesus to every eye, to close the testimony by the revelation of Himself—the same that He had been in the beginning, and the Almighty God; which was, and is, and which is to come; unchanged through all the changes that had taken place. But the title of Alpha and Omega, and of the Eternal, which God takes here, is the same that is given to Jesus (chap. 21:6), where the prophecy is closed. He is always the image of the invisible God, always God Himself manifested in the flesh; the One who is, who was, and who is to come; the Almighty. Also, in comparing 1 Timothy 6:14, 16, with Revelation 19:16, we see the title of King of kings and Lord of lords, which, in the first of these passages, is applied to Him “who dwelleth in the light to which no one can approach,” and who shall shew Jesus, applied to Jesus in the second; and when Jesus is “shewn,” He comes with the same titles which He bears who shews Him. The name of Almighty is that by which God reveals Himself to Abraham; Exodus 6:3. At the end of the verse He reveals Himself as the one who will fulfil to the Jews the

promises made to Abraham. The Almighty who had made these promises is the Eternal (that is to say Jehovah, the God of Israel.)

Verse 9. It is well to notice the position of John which is connected with the character of the book. He does not exactly present himself as a member of the body, though he is so, of course; but in his actual position, viz., where the delay of the coming of the Master places the faithful, that is, in tribulation. His actual position was like that of others in the tribulation of Christ as member of His kingdom, and like Him awaiting the moment when the accomplishment of the promises of the glory should take place— "in the tribulation, the kingdom, and the patience of Christ." Such is the position of the church, which becomes her while the king is hidden in God; John 21:22. The word of God and the testimony of Jesus had placed him there, and the testimony of Jesus was peculiarly that of the kingdom. Again, observe here that the Lord's day is Sunday. The meaning is not the day of the Lord. Nor is there any doubt that the greater part of the visions apply to what precedes that coming day. The rest of the chapter shews us already the glory of Christ. Affection is inseparable from testimony to the glory of Jesus.

Verses 12, 13. When John turns to look at the Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega, he sees Jesus. He sees what characterised the Ancient of days. Daniel 7:9, 13. In Daniel, the Son of man is led to the Ancient of days, and receives the dominion. In Revelation 1:14, Jesus, the Son of man, has the character of the Ancient of days.

Jesus cannot present Himself as Man without the church and the Holy Ghost recognizing Him as God, Eternal,

and Almighty, as the One who has dominion over the world. God gives us to understand His purposes concerning the world, and shews to us Jesus, who suffered, supremely exalted as Man. We see, when the Son of man is manifested in the glory (and so it was when sojourning here below), God Himself, the eternal God, as well as the man to whom all title to glory belongs. Jesus has the reward of having humbled and made Himself of no reputation for us. In Psalm 102 He says, “He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.” The answer is, “But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.” John sees also the seven churches (things that are), and Christ in the midst of these churches, not as serving them. His garments descend to His feet; His girdle of gold is divine glory in judgment, not spiritually on oneself, but to be executed on others—judicial firmness. His head reveals the Ancient of days. His eyes were piercing like fire in judgment. Glory and majesty were discovered in Him, and He held the representatives of the seven churches in the right hand of His power.

Verse 16. He judges by the word of His mouth, a two-edged sword. Glory supreme shines in His face.

Verse 17. We do not find the spirit of adoption and confidence. It is man standing in the presence of the glory of Him who rules. Speaking in this character, He communicates the revelation of God to His servant John, the prophet of the church.

Verse 18. Jesus, the Man once dead but now alive again, conqueror of hell and of death, takes away fear from him who finds death in the presence of His divine glory.

Verse 19. We see here the division of the Apocalypse into three parts:

Firstly, The things seen, that is to say, the glory of Jesus such as we have seen it described.

Secondly, The things that are, or the seven churches.

Thirdly, The things to come after them, or the prophecy; chapter 4:1.

The order of the book presents thus the Person of Jesus, Son of man in glory; the Eternal God; the churches, and Jesus as a judge in the midst of them; and then revelations concerning the world. Jesus is revealed here, not as the Head of the church, but as judge and ruler in the churches; not as the olive tree which gives the oil, or as the Head that distributes gifts, but as the Head who makes use only of threatenings and of rewards; not as servant or advocate, or shepherd of the sheep; but in a long robe, in the dignity of a judge, and like one who comes to see what light the candlesticks give.

It is important to apprehend that the general object of this book is the revelation of the relations of God, as ruler, with the world, viewed as introducing into it Jesus as heir. It will be seen how much of difficulty this removes. The understanding of the book supposes a soul established in its relations with the Father, and with the Son to whom God will reveal His purposes towards the world, as God. It would be grievous and shameful for us not to be sufficiently of the family of God to feel interested in all His glory.

Chapters 2, 3

I avoided in my lectures saying anything on the seven churches as not being strictly part of the prophecy. For

the satisfaction of my readers I shall add thereon only a few thoughts. There were doubtless seven churches thus named j but they were selected in order to present the thoughts of God to the whole church. The number seven is expressive of something spiritually complete. The seven churches are “the things which are,” and “the things which are” end with the history of the seven churches. “What was to happen after these” (chap. 1:19) cannot be considered as belonging to the present time in the sense in which this expression refers to the position in which John found himself. The prophetic details were outside of that period. They were the things which were to happen after it; that is to say, the prophetic details of this book were not comprised in “the things which are” considered severally as the time present of the churches.

But the seven churches may be viewed under a twofold aspect. First, there were seven churches existing at that very time. But, then, the glory of Christ, judging in the midst of the churches, was certainly not confined to this; and the number seven guides our thoughts towards something which is complete. Are we then to think of all the churches at that time, or of the general history of the church on the earth? In the first place, it is the moral condition of the church, wherein that is to be found which is spoken of; and the judgment pronounced is pronounced upon such a condition, and is addressed to “all that have ears to hear,” and would thus morally extend to all the churches existing at that time. But, inasmuch as it describes states distinct, differing one from the other, it is difficult to apply it to the whole church at any given period; and the thoughts are very naturally directed to periods in which the condition of

the professing church may have been characterised by what is said concerning the churches placed in succession before us.

The expression “the things which are” very naturally adapts itself to this; for, as we have seen, it is difficult to apply, at any given time, seven very different states to the general condition of the church, and it is evident that the expression “the things which are” comprises more than what is understood by the seven churches in Asia. Now the state of the professing church, until it is rejected as a witness on the earth, is naturally described by “the things which are,” as contrasted with the intentions of God in bringing in a new dispensation by the exercise of His power into the world. And this it is which distinguishes these two chapters from those which follow. The church is seen in a state of declension until she is spued out of the mouth of the Lord. Then comes the history of the throne. We may distinguish the seven churches of that time as presented to us historically (which do not perfectly set forth all God’s thoughts) from the history of the church in general until the end: each of these things presents to us “the things which are.”

There is here, with regard to the form of prophecy, an important observation to be made. When the people of God are more or less still recognised by Him, the prophecy is addressed to the people. When they are no more recognised of God, then the ways of God are communicated to the prophet who declares His counsels concerning the world. Thus the prophets of the Old Testament speak to the people, while the people are recognised of God. Daniel, a captive in Babylon, receives visions concerning their relations with the nations, and

the history of those nations: but the prophecy is not addressed to the people. Thus also the Apocalypse no longer recognises the church upon earth in the prophetic part of the book, and is not an address to the church itself. “The things which are,” and what John saw of the glory of Christ, judging in the midst of the churches, no doubt, is addressed to the churches. In the prophetic part, the testimony is given to her— is deposited with her, so to speak; but the word is not addressed to the church. The Lord had said, speaking of John, “but if I will that he tarry till I come”; John, the last of the apostles, bears personally to the churches the last testimony of Christ’s relationship with them (according to their present state—a state, it may be said, of transition, and where the churches are seen quite in a new light). As a symbolical person, his testimony lasts until the church is no more recognised at all; and prophecy takes the place of communication made direct to the church, and announces the introduction of the Firstborn in judgment (judgment of the apostasy and of the world), and the events which proceed from the throne and precede His introduction. It was necessary that the church should be put aside in order to speak of those things. Otherwise everything would have been done with a view to the church herself. The Lord is seen as the Lamb in the throne at the very beginning of the prophecy, as the One who has suffered in His own Person on the earth, and not as judging in the churches on the earth.

It would be impossible here to enter in detail upon the seven churches; it would be to write a book. The varied promises, descriptive of the heavenly portion that is to come, would deserve protracted study, as well as the

peculiar insignia by which Christ is designated, and the relation between the two; and also the connection of the latter with the state of the church in which they are severally found. I shall only endeavour to give a general outline, according to what we have seen. It is a state of transition. Christ is represented as a Judge in this book, judging either the churches or the world. He is no longer as the Head of the church communicating, in grace, blessings and precepts, or exhorting by the chosen members of the body, or girded with a towel washing the feet. He is judging the state of things and threatening them. At one time He threatens to remove the candlestick, when a church is not faithful to that which has been entrusted to her, as bearing testimony before the world.

There is another remark to be made here: God's candlestick. His government in the world was no longer at Jerusalem. God will govern the world by His Firstborn, and will prepare the way for Him by these judgments. But judgment begins at the house of God. The light—the candlestick of God—was there, and His name was upon them in the sight of the world. And whatever be its unfaithfulness, and however God may act in raising a testimony elsewhere before the world, until such a system be judged, as a system established of God, it bears its responsibility, and God acts in judgment towards it. Jerusalem was the seat of God's testimony. His candlestick had been there. I need not insist amongst Christians that the light and the presence of God were spiritually dwelling in the midst of Christians. Nevertheless, Jerusalem's responsibility and her position before the world only ceased in her destruction by the judgment of God. After this, God's candlestick, in a

terrestrial sense, was in the professing church. Till then, Christians had been, to the eye of the world, a sect of the Jews. Thus we see Aquila and Priscilla at a distance from Rome, because Claudius had commanded that every Jew should depart from it. At Antioch, in the midst of the Gentiles, which was the starting-point of the labours of Paul, apostle of the Gentiles, the believers begin to have a peculiar name. They were first called Christians at Antioch; Acts 11:26.

Thus God was preparing little by little, and especially by the mission of Paul, another candlestick before the world. Jerusalem, labouring under the weight of her sins and the guilt of the blood of the Just One, by the judgments of God upon her, disappears entirely from the scene, and the professing church is the only witness for God remaining before the world. The judgment of God upon the earth consequently connects itself with the professing church. The position of the church was perhaps more happy before, when she had only to seek her blessings from house to house, (Acts 2:46), and while the temple remained the public place of the testimony of God; yet God is always faithful to His own, and wise in His ways. It is, however, under this new character that the church is considered in the Apocalypse. Christ is there judging in the midst of the candlesticks. In the prophetical part, the church is no more seen on earth. The judgments concern the world, and the events proceed from the throne on high, not from Christ walking on earth in the midst of the candlesticks, which shone very little perhaps, but which still were there.

Thus the addresses to the seven churches, while applying to the seven churches in Asia, and severally to

any one, are applicable to the professing church so long as she retains this place manifestly on the earth. In detail it may be removed from one place and carried to another, as has been the case. We must remember also that the characteristic condition of one church may begin, and that of another still continue. Alas! the state of the church at Ephesus has continued to the end, and the candlestick will be removed. Many more sorrows have occurred in the meantime. One thing more is to be remarked. The characters according to which Christ acts in the midst of the churches until Thyatira are those found in the revelation of His glory in what preceded; chap. 1. This is no longer the case from Sardis, save the fact that He retains in His hand the authority over the churches; the seven stars are still there. But the names He takes (that is to say, the character according to which He acts, and which is the object of intelligent faith in the church) must always be looked for farther off in the knowledge of Christ. They are beyond that revelation of Himself which constitutes the basis of His relationship with the churches in the normal position which He takes towards them here.

In the church at Sardis then, the testimony of the churches, in a certain sense, begins as it were anew, while still remaining part of the whole. The Spirit repeats this characteristic trait— Jesus holds the seven stars in His right hand. But the position is less ecclesiastical, and has more of what is essential in the nature of His relation with the churches. There is an exception to be made to what has been said in the case of Thyatira. “Son of God” is not part of the revelation of Christ in the preceding chapter. But it seems to me that the apostasy in principle which characterises the church

in Thyatira (association with idols, and this being tolerated)—this fact had its place when a well-known ecclesiastical relation was coming to an end. Christ is the Son of God; it is under this essential title of the glory of His Person that He laid the basis of the church, and was the object of her faith. Thus the claims of the church, as being associated as co-heir with Him, in contrast with the nations, come in entirely in their place, when the professing church was abandoning her only faith, and the hope which was hers as set apart to God. The Morning Star, the dawn of a new day, shone in the heart of him that overcame under such circumstances. (Compare chap. 22:16.)

These seven churches, considered as a continued series of the history of the church, would then present to us the following epochs. Her first declension already in the time of John; the time of persecution; the professing church established in the empire or in the world, and the germ of the ecclesiastical apostasy; the time of this ecclesiastical apostasy, when Jezebel is seducing and tolerated; Sardis, the time of Protestantism as a system established in the earth; the time when, deprived of strength, faithfulness to the word of the patience of Christ characterises those who knew it; the time of saying We are rich, when, in true riches, everything is wanting. This last is the final state—the lukewarmness which Christ spues out of His mouth.

Observe, that we must not look for energy producing effects, but for the effect produced by that energy. This is what God judges. He acts in energy. Thus the Reformation was the energy of the Holy Ghost; the state of Protestantism is a thing which He judges. The churches characterise the state, the position of the

Christian testimony which attracts the attention of the world—the candlestick which is there to give light. If this is the case, it is evident that the study of the speciality of these churches is of the utmost interest to my reader. I earnestly entreat him to make it his study—so much the more, because the most precious traits of the heavenly joy are found therein.

I shall only add a few words more in general on the whole. The promises made to the first two churches relate to the general recompense, and are, of course, so to speak, for every Christian. The promise made to the third relates to a personal and individual knowledge of Jesus, which supposes that strength for faithfulness of walk is already found more in the faith and in the faithfulness of the individual. Jesus is known alone, and also enjoyed alone. There is in the church of Thyatira, amidst the general iniquity, a remarkable faithfulness and devotedness; and the Spirit of God, while leaving to the body the character of the candlestick, that is to say, the responsibility of witnessing before the world, distinguishes entirely those who had not taken part in this iniquity. Observe chapter 2:24, where the lesson is still stronger, or at least more clear, in all the critical editions.

We may observe that in the last three churches that of Sardis is threatened with the judgment of the world. (Compare 1 Thess. 5.) That of Philadelphia becomes of an inestimable price for the faithful of this time. The coming of Jesus is declared therein to sustain faith in a peculiar manner. And, finally (shewing at the same time His perfect patience, if any of His abode there still), we see in the case of Laodicea the professing church spued out of the Lord’s mouth.

Chapters 4, 5

These two chapters together form a whole, a sort of preface, which introduces us into the scene where the prophet was introduced, that is to say, heaven. The prophecy, properly so called, begins only with chapter 6, at the opening of the seals.

Chapter 4 begins with the things which must be hereafter;4 that is to say, after the seven churches. The things that he saw are the glory of Christ in the midst of the churches. The things which are are the seven churches. The things which must be hereafter begin when the churches are set aside; chap. 3:16; compare chap. 4:1:19. The seven churches are a moral prophecy, containing promises and threatenings, founded on a certain conduct. The church, being judged as it were, is put aside. These letters may be applied to the church in every state thus described. They are the voice of Jesus judging the state of the churches.

In chapter 4 we see the things which are to come afterwards. It is no more the things which are: these last so long as the church remains. It is from that term "which are" that the double interpretation of the Apocalypse proceeds. If the seven churches are taken as a sketch of the history of the church, Laodicea, the last one, receives this sentence— "I will spue thee out of my mouth." Consequently, the church is then no more recognised on earth; and what follows in the Revelation is the history of the government of God, and the chastisements sent on the earth from that time, until Christ comes to establish His kingdom. If the churches are taken in a literal sense, the types of the prophecy must be applied to events which have for the greater

part already taken place; but in any case the church in the Revelation is neither recognised nor presented on earth from chapter 4, from the time that the scene changes, and that John, leaving “the things which are,” is introduced into heaven to see “the things which are to come.”

The things which are being then put aside, chapter 4 begins. As long as those things are, nothing in chapter 4 has yet taken place. In this chapter the church is always looked at as being in heaven, although she is not as yet manifested (which only takes place in chapters 19 and 20). The subject of chapter 4 is creation, and the right of God over creation.

The subject of chapter 5 is the rights of the Lamb as Redeemer, Jesus’ right of redemption. The Holy Ghost is no more presented in God’s relations with His children; it is the relationship of God and of the world. Since Jesus has rights over the world, He is presented here in the throne, and God likewise is seen sitting on it. The right of God’s throne in creation. The right of the Lamb in redemption. This is, as a summary, the subject of these two chapters.

Chapter 4:1. Come up hither. The earth is done with (as his place); he leaves the earth. The time will come when there shall be a throne on the earth. In the passage before us God’s throne is in heaven. The throne of God was once on the earth at Jerusalem. This will take place once more, as it is said in Jeremiah 3:17. The shekinah of glory was in the temple; but from the time that Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar it entirely ceased. Then began the times of the Gentiles, and God gave the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar.

At the beginning of Ezekiel the same cherubim are seen leaving the temple and the city; Ezek. 10:18; 11:23.5 Jehovah stands on the threshold of the house; Ezek. 9:3. At last He forsakes the house and the city—the earthly power was given to the Gentiles; Dan. 2:37. The people having been unfaithful, God forsook His people, and from that time He has not taken again His place in the earth. The only thing God did was to present His Son as King, and as having right to reign over the Jews; but the Son was rejected. From that time God is gathering the church, the co-heirs with Christ. Christ is sitting on the throne with the Father, where He is interceding for us. When the church, viewed as a dispensation on earth, has come to an end, the throne of God becomes again the centre of relation with the earth, and God begins to intervene again directly in the world, without having yet replaced His Son on the earth. If we examine the throne (v. 2, 5, 6), we find everything ordered there according to the pattern of the temple; but the subject is here government.

We find here all the characters of God except that of Father. The rainbow (v. 3) is God's alliance with creation. There was no government before Noah. After the deluge, God makes a promise to bless the earth, and He sets man in power with the sword to rule and to repress evil. When the Jews were rejected, God transmitted the government to the Gentiles, who retain it until this day.

Verse 4. The twenty-four elders correspond with the twenty-four classes of priests in 1 Chronicles 24; but they are crowned. The number twenty-four represents twice twelve. One might perhaps see here the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles—the saints in the two dispensations.

Verse 5. The lightnings, the thunderings, the voices, are God's power in judgment, and in ruling, as in Sinai. The seven lamps of fire are the manifestation of God in leading, enlightening, and blessing; it is the guiding power of the Holy Ghost with the elements of strength and wisdom. He discerns with a power which acts amidst what He discerns.

The sea of glass6 corresponds with the brazen sea of the tabernacle and of the temple, where however no veil is here seen. The sea of glass is a purity that has become solid, having taken the character of a permanent state; it is no more water, that is to say, a mere way of cleansing, as on the earth in the brazen sea.

The four living creatures full of eyes are the supporters of the throne. They have significative attributes. The Hon is expressive of strength, royal power. Jesus is the Lion of Judah. The resemblance to a calf recalls firmness, the solidity peculiar to the foot of the ox. The resemblance to a man's face sets forth intelligence. The flying eagle designates rapidity in judgments. It is always God in the creation. It is an allusion to Ezekiel 1; but in Ezekiel every living creature had four faces, shewing the power of providence which sees all and acts on earth.

But here we see the stability and the firmness of God's throne in heaven. We see here God's power and His claims over creation, not the agents of this power. It has not been sufficiently observed that principles of action are here spoken of, and not agents. That is the reason why the four living creatures have not been well understood.

Verse 8. We have here still all the names of God, save the one in which the church is concerned—that of Father. He is Lord God Almighty, Eternal. These are the names by which God has revealed Himself in every dispensation.7 With the redeemed now He takes the name of Father. We have all that God has been on the earth with His people, and nothing else. These living creatures acknowledge God as the Holy One in all He does on earth, and they give Him glory.

Verse 9. The twenty-four elders prostrate themselves (it is positive worship), and do not, like the four living creatures, give glory merely. The church (it might perhaps be well to say the saints above; we must understand it as the twenty-four elders, including probably the faithful in the Old Testament) joins in the praises of the four living creatures, and worships God as the Creator (t\ n). It is not according to the relation between God and the church. The church here sees God as the Creator. It is important to apprehend this character of government of the things of this world. It is from this throne, as the centre of government, that everything in the Revelation comes. This throne is about to intervene in the government of the earth, and it is precisely because Christ comes to claim His rights to the government of the earth, that Antichrist is preparing to make war with Christ.

Chapter 5. We find in this chapter another truth of great moment; it is the right of the Lamb put to death, to open the book and to set all these things in motion. Verse 5. We have here the counsels of God in giving the inheritance to His Son. This book, sealed with seven seals, is the book of the inheritance (that is, of the investiture)—the description of the means used by God

in order to put Jesus in possession— of His ways in judgment full of patience to the end, of which the right of redemption which devolves on Jesus forms the basis. (See Isaiah 26:5-11.) Jeremiah, in chapter 32, tells us that the purchase of an inheritance was subscribed on two books, one sealed, and the other open. The sealed book is the contract of the inheritance that is to be given to the Son. Who can unroll the events which will invest Christ with the inheritance of the earth? No one but Christ Himself. Who has a right to do it? He alone, the Redeemer, who has purchased it, who by His blood and by His power can claim and deliver everything as His own. (Compare Eph. 1.) Alas! there is no weeping now, because no one is found worthy to read the book; because one does not understand how the inheritance shall be given to the Son of man. However, the “Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” Adam had a right to the inheritance, but he lost it. Christ had to redeem this right from Satan’s hands. He had to pay the price: and this price was His own death, which He gave for it. He has redeemed everything for Himself. All was created by Him and for Him; but through Adam this lower creation fell into Satan’s hands, who uses it to corrupt men and to keep them at a distance from God.

Verses 6, 10. In the midst of the throne and of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain. The Lamb had seven horns. The horns are the emblem of power; seven is the symbol of perfection. The seven horns are expressive of perfection in power; the seven eyes are the perfection of the Spirit who sees all. It is the active power of the perfect wisdom of the Lamb who acts on the earth. The

Lamb is always seen as if it had been slain, and not as yet manifested in glory. Boaz had to redeem Elimelech's land, and Ruth is a type of the redeemed. Jesus, the true Boaz, the alone mighty One, redeems Ruth, His own people, and the land of Elimelech, the earth. That which gives to the Lamb the right to exercise all power is that He has paid the ransom to God. God had, as it were, lost the inheritance. But the Lamb has redeemed it to God.

Verse 10. The joy of those whom He has redeemed.8 They rejoice because they know they shall reign on earth, according to the right of Jesus which they can claim. They see the Lamb having taken the book, and God beginning to intervene, in order to give Christ the government of the earth, and they see that they shall reign.

Verses 11-14. The angels do not say that He has redeemed them. He only preserved them. Creation has again her voice to bless Him who redeemed her. God lives for ever and ever. Man having killed the Heir, it would seem for a while that the inheritance is his. But God lives for ever and ever. The patience of God and His goodness in the midst of evil will have been manifested. If there had been no evil, the goodness of God would never have been thus manifested. But God has overcome evil with good. The church's place is to be in the intimacy of God and to understand Christ's intentions and God's thoughts. These things have been revealed unto us by His Spirit. It is, in this sense, knowledge which distinguishes the church. Hereafter, the church will enjoy all that Christ possesses in power. These two chapters arc very important for the understanding the glory of Christ and the Revelation. The glory of Christ is that which is particularly brought out by the Revelation.

If the reading of this book makes the glory of Christ precious to us, our enjoyment of it will be much greater. May God shed abroad that love in our hearts and give us to delight in the love of Jesus!

Chapter 6

We have seen the character under which God is presented to us in this book. The Revelation presents God as the Most High God; we see therein the throne of God Almighty in the world. The things connected with providence are under this government.

We have seen, besides, that the Lamb has a right to the inheritance. The great object of the book of the Revelation is the Son of man invested with the inheritance which He has redeemed, and of which He has taken away the defilement. All the creation of God has been defiled. The day of atonement furnishes us with a type of its redemption by Jesus. We see in that type, first, the blood on the mercy-seat, by which alone God could enter into relation with any one; secondly, the blood on the tabernacle defiled by the sins of the people; thirdly, the confession by the high priest of the sins of the people on the head of the scape-goat. The creation is redeemed as well as the church—the church, to be co-heir with Christ; the creation, to be the inheritance. The inheritance is given to the Son of man; such is the grand subject here presented to us. He alone has the right to open the book. Redemption has given Him this right.

The Lamb begins the opening of the seals. He does not yet appear to take possession of the inheritance and to execute the judgment. He is still the Lamb in the midst of the throne, in heaven during the interval in which God takes the government, without having yet given the

throne to the Son. We see what passes before Jesus takes possession of the inheritance.

Verse 1. “One of the four living creatures [beasts],” it is still providence which is in action here. These symbols are a surely defined language, as well as any other, when you have once apprehended the proper meaning of each of them according to the word of God. The application of a symbol has often been mistaken for its meaning. Thus Christ is called the Sun of Righteousness; but Sun does not mean Christ. The sun is merely a symbol of glory and supreme government. God made the sun to rule the day; Gen. I:16. One would err in leaving out the abstract idea, and in taking the sun for Christ.

A horse represents that action of providence which manifests itself in the government of the earth under different forms, and more accurately the imperial power considered as the effect of the work of God, or of the agents He makes use of. It is a symbol which may be figurative of Christ, or of an emperor, or of some one else. An allusion is here made to Zechariah 1, where the horses represent empires which have exercised dominion over the Jews. The white horse is victory and triumph. I do not see Christ here. Christ is still the Lamb in the midst of the throne. We do not yet see Christ here going forth to the victory and the destruction of His enemies, which is symbolised by the white horse in chapter 19. Here we have Christ, the Lamb, still hidden in God, who begins to act. We have here the providential preparations of the divine government for the coming of Jesus.

Verse 2. The first thing manifested is a great conqueror. Verses 3, 4. The second step, in what precedes the

coming of Christ, is peace taken from the earth. Verses 5, 6. Famine. Verses 7,8. The four judgments of God on earth; Ezek. 14:21. They are the four deadly plagues which God sends to exercise His judgments. Here, it is something which stamps God's character on the state of things in the prophetic earth, and shews that He is intervening. Men should give heed to this; Matt. 24:5-8.

These calamities are the beginning of sorrows. It is in Judea that the closing scene is to take place. These plagues are in the same order here as in Matthew 24. Peace is taken from the earth, famine, pestilence, and then come earthquakes, as we shall see. In Matthew 24 the Lord is applying this to the duty of His disciples in Judea. Although there has been a partial fulfilling of this at the time when Jerusalem was taken by Titus, yet it would be impossible to apply the things which are said there to that ruin. These things evidently relate to a future event. According to Daniel, at the end of twelve hundred and ninety days, after setting up the abomination that makes desolate, happiness will come again on the earth; Dan. 12:11. But this is not yet fulfilled, nor has anything like it followed the ruin of Jerusalem. Indeed, nothing concerning the ruin of Jerusalem, by Titus certainly, answers to the details given in this part of scripture. The four deadly plagues which God sends fall on the earth, and precede the manifestation of the Son of man.

Verses 9-11. The fifth seal brings us to an important point. All the scene passes as in the temple. There are, under the altar, the souls of those that were slain like burnt offerings.9 They are dead as to this world, but not as to God. God sees them and shews them alive. There will be those who will be put to death, even from

amongst those who believe and bear witness that the earth belongs to God. Our testimony at present is, that heaven and everything belongs to God, and that our portion is with Jesus there. There will be quite a different testimony at the end, namely, that the earth belongs to God, and has been redeemed by Jesus. The two witnesses in chapter 11 stand in the presence of the Lord of the earth. Their testimony would be quite as complete if there were no heaven, save that the rightful Heir is there. The question will then be this, Does the earth belong to God? This is what the Antichrist and the men of the earth will not admit. The testimony is that of Elias and Moses (chap, 11:6) as to the circumstances and signs which confirm it. In the time of Elias the people were in apostasy, and in the time of Moses they were in captivity. Such will be the state of the earthly people then. There will be a testimony rendered to God's claims on the earth. Our testimony is the testimony of salvation and of the church; it is not connected with earth, although we understand what the word of God says concerning it.

The souls cry for vengeance; it is the character of the Spirit of prophecy; it is not that of the church. She does not say, "How long dost thou not avenge our blood? "This characterises the Psalms also. Deliverance is expected from the destruction of her enemies, whilst the church's rest is by her removal from among them. The Spirit of Christ, as the King and Judge of the earth, cries for vengeance to God on the evil; Isa. 26:1, 9. The wicked has not the upper hand with me now; if he kill me, death is mine, and he only sends me where I desire to be.

“Those that dwell on the earth” is a particular expression in the book of Revelation. There are those who dwell in the heavens—it is the church.10 The same is true of those who are put to death during the reign of Antichrist, or who shall have been beheaded for their testimony. “We have no abiding city here.” We are like the Levites and priests without inheritance in Israel. The inhabitants of the earth are the enemies of God, the race of Cain driven from the presence of God, who settled in the earth. The world was judged from the moment Christ was rejected. All those who will settle in the earth share in the curse of Cain. Man sinned against God, and the earth was cursed. But when Cain had killed his brother, he was cursed from the earth, and, driven out of God’s presence, he went and built a city and settled in the earth. This is what the world does after having put Jesus to death. They that dwell on the earth are those on whom the judgment shall fall.

The souls under the altar do not doubt their possession of heaven. The expression “How long? “is a technical one, signifying either that God is chastening, or that one is enduring some evil; but also, inasmuch as it is on His own, expressing confidence that this chastisement will come to an end. It is faith in the midst of chastisement or of suffering, which is looking to God for His intervention; Isa. 6:11. It is those who are in heaven that cry for vengeance on the inhabitants of the earth.11 It is altogether another position from that of the church. The current of our thoughts is altogether changed, because the government of God and His taking possession of the earth is the whole matter in question here. Verse 11. Although the time is near when all must be closed, nevertheless, there are still witnesses. Verses 12-17.

There is still here an important preliminary, the sixth seal. All these things are to precede the day of Christ. But the terror of men is already so great, that they believe the day has arrived. The earthquakes indicate the breaking up of the arrangement of things on earth, an overthrow of everything. The sun (that is to say, the glory and the supreme government) loses its brightness. Everything gives way and sinks under the hand of God—even authorities established above the earth. In verse 14 it is said that every mountain was moved out of its place; and in verse 15, that they hid themselves in the mountains. One sees here that the symbols are not to be taken literally.

In Joel 2:30 we learn that these things take place before the day of the Lord—before the execution of judgment. There are many things which precede that day, which are not even events on earth, but preliminaries in the government of God; Psalm 2:8, 12. Christ does not as yet ask of God the world for His own; His requests now only apply to the church. When He claims the earth, it is for judgment; but (v. 12) there are warnings for the kings of the earth. There the question is, not that of recognising the Son as the Saviour, but as the King who has a right to possess the earth. All who belong to Christ shall be with Him, and shall have power over the nations; chap. 2:26, 27. This power then is, not the assembling of the church together, but the exercise of the power of Him who is on the throne, and the warning in Psalm 2 is in order that the kings may be rendered attentive and submissive. Christ has not only the right of gathering souls for heaven, but also to be put in possession of the earth.

Nothing is more proper than prophecy to move the heart and to separate it from this present evil world. God lays His hand on everything that is in this world. The scene of the world is nothing, it only draws away from God, and will be the object on which the judgment of the Son of God shall fall when He comes again.

Chapter 7

We have seen the manifestation of the throne and of the power of God acting in government over the world; the right of the Lamb to intervene on earth and to open the seals; then the plagues of God preparatory to this intervention.

Chapter 7 forms a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh seals, for God is going to intervene in a more special and positive manner at the centre of everything, in Canaan; but He will not do anything before He has separated His Jewish people and set His seal upon them. God does not any longer confine Himself now to a beginning of sorrows, and He seals His people on earth. We see at the same time those that are sealed on earth and those that are already in heaven.

Verse 2. From the east: Christ is the dayspring. The angel ascends from the east, from whence the Sun of Righteousness is to rise on earth. It is always the day for those who are in the light. The day of the Lord is the day of judgment for those who are on earth. The day of the Lord and the coming of Jesus are two very distinct things. When the scripture speaks of the coming of Jesus, it applies the expression, not only to the day of the Lord, but also to what precedes that day, that is, to the rapture of the church, which goes to meet the Lord in the air; 1 Thess. 4:15, 17. The day for those who are

of the day is the light, the blessing, when the day of Christ shall dawn on earth. We shall be like the rays of that sun; but for the wicked, that day will be their confusion. The living God is the God who has life, and not the God of judgment. The life of God is powerful, more powerful than death which Satan holds in his hand.

Verse 5. We have here a principle which is very precious. In all the overthrowings, in all the preparations for the judgments of God, the power of the angel, who displays God's power in mercy, is greater than the power of the angels who execute the judgments of God. The good is more powerful than the evil. That angel who holds the seal can cry with a loud voice, Do not hurt. This may be seen also in the case of Lot, who is a type of the remnant that escapes at the coming of the Son of man. The angels could do nothing to Sodom until he had left it. There is, therefore, a precedence in the attributes of God, and His mercy always goes before His justice. The first thing the angel does is to mark the servants of the Lord on their forehead, that it may be manifested to the whole world. Those that are marked are the remnant of Israel on earth; they are not the children of God (that is, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, the faithful in the present dispensation). In one sense, we ought to have the seal on our forehead, that is to say, an open confession of the name of the Lord Jesus; but as for the Christian, the seal of God is in himself, that he may have the enjoyment and the liberty of communion with the Son and with the Father. Having this seal, we are manifested in the sight of the powers in heavenly places. But here we have a seal and a manifestation on earth.

Verses 5-8. The number twelve is symbolical; it is the perfect number of those who escape of the remnant in Israel. God alone can know the number of those He seals. We have the unction of the Holy Ghost to understand all things; the seal of the Holy Spirit, in order to enjoy the communion of God, as knowing that we are His, and are assured of His favour; also the earnest of the Holy Spirit in order to rejoice in the expectation of those things that we know. This privilege is far above what we find here. Our portion is to be blessed with Him that blesses; Israel's portion is to be blessed on the earth.

Verses 9-12. As to the great multitude of all tongues, and kindreds, and peoples, and nations, the language they hold in verse 10 is not the expression of the enjoyment of the children with the Father.12 They confine themselves to acknowledge God as the God who saves. One may be standing in the contemplation of the glory, or prostrate oneself in adoration. This is the variety seen in heaven. It is ever God and the Lamb that are spoken of here, not the enjoyment of the children with the Father. Those that are in the world do not see Him as He is. We see Him as He is in the glory of the Father. Israel will see Him in His own glory, and we shall be in that glory with Jesus, as Jesus is in the glory of the Father. The multitute here worship standing before the throne, ascribing their salvation unto God and unto the Lamb. The elders prostrate themselves apart, celebrating the glory of God Himself. What we are considering is not the sweetest thought of our relations with God.

Verses 13, 14. It is one of the elders that speaks, and not one of the four living beings: because it is the heavenly joy that is spoken of here, and not God's providence over

the earth. It is important to observe the variety of classes and of blessings which are found at different times in the Revelation. Those who have come out of the great tribulation are a distinct class; they are those, it seems to me, who will have gone through the events which follow, and especially who will have come out of the great tribulation foretold in Revelation 3:10.

The tribulation in Matthew 24:21 is more particularly connected with what will take place in Judea, or rather at Jerusalem, under Antichrist, and is applied to the Jews. Those who have come out from the great tribulation (some translate of “great tribulation,” or of “a great tribulation,”) are not the church properly so called; for, as is seen in Revelation 3:10, she will be kept out of it. I do not mean either, that they are the same persons as those spoken of in connection with the great tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24:15, 22, for in Matthew those persons are evidently Jews: whereas, in the chapter before us, they that came out of the great tribulation are Gentiles. “A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.” There is a certain vagueness, moreover, in the expressions; and this, it seems to me, according to the intention of the Holy Spirit. They are specially recognised of the four elders; but they do not appear to be the church, properly so called.

Verse 15. These are Jewish ideas; the presence of God in the midst of His people, serving God in His temple, contemplating the exquisite beauty of His temple and of His palace. We serve God, either in adoring Him, or in working for Him. “They serve him day and night in his temple.”

Verses 16, 17. God is a tabernacle over them,13 as if to solace them. The Lamb feeds and leads them. God would dispel, in the souls of those that are His, the dread of His Majesty, by the thoughts of His gentleness, His meekness. A soul that is unconverted has no idea of a God tender, gentle, who “wipes away tears.” God will have us near Him, as children near their father. He loves His children enough to take notice of all their afflictions, to comfort them, and to wipe away their tears.

Chapter 8

Verse 1. There is silence, repose. Verse 2. God is announcing Himself. He is going to intervene in a more direct manner. He is announcing Himself by the trumpets. Verses 3-5. There were two altars in the temple. The temple was divided in two by the veil, which separated the holy place from the most holy. The altar of incense was in the holy place outside the veil, and outside this latter was the altar of burnt offering;14 that is to say, in the world. It is in the world that Christ suffered, and that the saints suffer also. The altar of incense was in the sanctuary, and the incense ascended up to the throne of God in the holiest: the altar stood immediately before the throne. The saints are still in sorrow; their cries and their supplications ascend up before God, who begins to intervene. The cries of the saints cause God to intervene with judgment. Jesus is the angel here who presents the prayers of the saints. He does not present Himself as their Advocate with the Father, which is what refers to our spiritual state, but as calling down the judgments of God on those who oppressed them.

Verses 6-13. We see God intervening in a positive manner, by His judgments. First trumpet. God's judgment falling on the prophetical earth; that is, on the four monarchies. The trees figure that which is elevated, eminent, lofty; the green herb is prosperity. Second trumpet. The sea, the people that are not in the prophetic earth, the mass of people.

Third trumpet. The rivers: this symbolical emblem is difficult to understand easily. I have observed, I think, two things in the use that scripture makes of it. First, the people, the rivers have laid waste the land of Israel. Secondly, the principles which govern those people. The rivers represent the activity of the people under certain principles; Isa. 8:5-8. The waters of the river (v. 7), are the king of Assyria and all his glory. Thus, in Isaiah 59:19, Psalm 93:3, 4, the rivers are the people over which the Eternal has trampled, to establish His kingdom which is recognised in this psalm. "And there fell a great star." It is a power in a state of fall; the bitter waters are the corruption of the principles of the people.

The fourth trumpet. The sun is the supreme power and glory. The moon and the stars are subaltern glories, of an order inferior to that of the sun. The people of God are in misery, their prayers are ascending up. God intervenes and smites the earth, not yet the inhabitants thereof, but their circumstances, their riches, the things in which they delight. To-day, on the contrary, while it is yet called the day of grace, God smites in order to convert and to chastise His children, while we often see the wicked prospering greatly.

The three following trumpets concern the inhabitants of the earth; but until the fourth trumpet has sounded the

judgments are only outward judgments. Even before these outward woes can coma, God is marking and sealing His elect ones; these judgments do not hurt them; they fall on those who afflict them.

The heavenly people suffer with Christ for the sake of Jesus. This is something higher than suffering for conscience' sake. The kingdom of God is for those who suffer for righteousness' sake; but the reward of those who suffer for Jesus's sake shall be great in heaven. Abraham and Lot are a proof of this. Lot sees the plain of Jordan and chooses the earth. He is in outward blessing; but he is in the land of Sodom; He draws nearer and nearer to Sodom; and at last we see him an inhabitant there. Abraham is far from it; God apprises him of what He is going to do for Sodom.

The church in peace, beloved of God, and separated from the world, converses with God on what is going to happen to the world. Israel would have the world; they said, Let us kill the heir and the inheritance shall be ours. The church says with Thomas, "Let us go also, that we may die with him," John 11:16. Israel, therefore, will be in affliction, as Lot was in Sodom; but will escape as through fire. The remnant of Israel will love righteousness; but, having loved the world, suffers the affliction and the anguish of a man who finds himself where the judgments of God will fall on the world; Abraham saw afar off the smoke ascending up from the plain; but he was not there.

There are afflictions brought on through faithfulness; this is then suffering with Christ. There are others also which proceed from unfaithfulness. It is well to remark that there are blessings, through God's mercy,

connected with faithfulness in a position which, by the weakness of our faith, we have been led into; but these are not the blessings attached to a simple faith. And they are accompanied with sufferings and sorrows which have more or less the character of chastisements. What concerns the judgment of the world is interesting to the church, because God communicates to her, as to a friend, what will happen to the world. Can a friend not feel interested in what his friend communicates to him?

It is absolutely necessary that we should renounce everything. We shall have to do so sooner or later, either with joy by the Spirit of Christ, or with shame when the judgments of God shall break every tie that is still keeping us back. We must then leave everything, or else be burnt up with Sodom. Prophecy has a special power to separate us from this present evil world, which the patience of God can bear, because He is taking His own out of it, but which is judged already nevertheless.

Chapters 9, 10, 11:18

These present chapters carry us down to the close of the book of Revelation in the general scope of the prophecy. Chapter n:18 closes the general history. It is the conclusion of the history of the government and of the judgment of God on the earth. There is something progressive in the action of the providential government of God over men. We see, first, things of ordinary occurrence, such as famines, pestilences. After this there are judgments more striking, powers falling; then, in the first four trumpets, men judged in their circumstances. In the last three trumpets the judgments fall on men themselves. After chapter 12 we have the history of the apostasy.

Chapter 9. Fifth trumpet. The star falling on the earth is a heavenly power fallen. The key of the bottomless pit was given unto him. God permits Satan to act sometimes for the good of His children, sometimes to let His judgments fall on His enemies. Satan and his angels are rejoiced to lay hold of an opportunity to do evil. God is coming here to chastise the wickedness of men. There are already on earth elect ones of the twelve tribes in Israel who have the seal of God marked on their foreheads. They were sealed of God before they knew it themselves. The progress of their knowledge is not our subject here; but Daniel u, 12, and the Psalms may be consulted.

Verse 2. Here is a diabolical influence which obscures the government of the earth. The smoke darkens the air and the sun (that is, the ordinary state of the earth, with regard to its government and the general influences which act on men).

Verse 4. This diabolical power not only obscures that which gives light to men, but it torments them and exercises a deadly influence over them. Wholesome influences are poisoned by it, and this power which rises from the bottomless pit penetrates everywhere.

Verse 3. God’s purpose is not yet to kill men. Satan, whatever his power and his malice, cannot do anything but what is in the purpose of God. It is a moral diabolical power over men who have not the mark of God on their forehead. This power has no influence on the grass, on the verdure (on circumstances), but only on those who are not recognised of God.15 Satan has power to torment the enemies of God with judgments, which affect them first in their circumstances, and then in their

own persons, and torment them because the first judgments had not produced their due effect.

Verses 5, 6. The anguish is such that men desire to die. Verse 7. It is a people raised up to act in judgment over others. It is the form Satan's power takes. Crowns like gold have an appearance of royal justice, pretending perhaps to be divine. Verse 8. Their power of destruction is seen. Verse 9. Their power to hurt is in their tail. The tail is the image of the false prophets. Compare Isaiah 9:14. Verse 11. They have a king who rules the satanical darkness, which can act upon the earth. He is the destroyer, Apollyon. Thus God acts in a much more direct way on men, not now merely on their circumstances only. This is the first woe.

Sixth trumpet (v. 13-21). The angel sounds on the summons of Christ. The Lord is still hidden; but He is already occupied with the earth, where He has a people for whom He is interceding. (Compare Isaiah 30:18.) A voice is heard from the four horns of the golden altar, or the altar of incense (Exodus 40:26, 27), from the altar of intercession. The voice gives an order to the angel who sounded the sixth trumpet. The intercession does not apply to the moral condition or to the spiritual conflicts of those who profit by them, but to the manifestation of the judgments of God, which will in time operate the deliverance of an earthly people.

Verse 15. Men are not only tormented now, but their life is attacked. Verse 17. Fire and sulphur are the power of judgment, of death and hell, in the hands of Satan, over men. Verse 19. There is further here the power of the prophet of lies; at the same time, as a special satanical power, that of the ancient serpent. Verses 20, 21. All

these previous judgments do not alter men, who are poisoned by the tails of the horses (which, like unto serpents, have power with their heads to hurt men). They have been given up to Satan, and strong delusion has been sent unto them that they should believe a lie; 2 Thess. 2:11. The same had happened to the Pagans, who were given up to a spirit of darkness and of unbelief (Rom. 1:28), and to the Jews also, whose heart was made fat. God did send them the word of truth, but they preferred a lie, and God gave them up to their own desire—a lie, and a lie that works efficaciously. It is an awful judgment. Those who will not receive the word of truth may prosper in their outward circumstances; but this prosperity precedes their ruin. This is what the world has to expect.

Chapter 10. This chapter forms a parenthesis, an episode. There is a system of great moment, which is to develop itself, the apostasy. It is what we have most minutely described in the Apocalypse. Before closing what is connected with the government of God on earth, it is necessary to introduce the subject of this apostasy. This is done here. The scene passes in judea. The nations have gathered round Jerusalem like unto sheaves ready for the judgments of God to pass on them. Till this time the immediate intervention of God had not taken place on the earth.

The first book had seals. Here, it is a book open, where every one may read, which, while applying to the earth, is also applicable to an open and public testimony to His name and the walk or profession which accompanies it, not to the hidden things of God in providence. Verse 1. The rainbow designates God’s alliance with creation, and His faithfulness towards creation; the sun, supreme

power; the pillars of fire, firmness of judgment. Verse 2. This revelation is given by Christ Himself, as having dominion over the earth, and as going to take possession of it in judgment. There is no more mystery, for the book is open. We do not see here Christ as the Lion of Juda, but the rights which belong to Christ. He sets one foot on the earth, the other on the sea; that is to say, on the prophetic earth and on things standing outside, particularly the world. Verse 3. The seven thunders. All God's rights over the earth, and His voice, which makes those rights be heard. The manner in which this takes place is not revealed.

Verses 5-10. Judgment is still suspended until the seventh trumpet should have sounded. There would, however, no longer be delay, but the mystery of God would be accomplished, as He had announced to the prophets. There will be a special object of the last judgment, the beast which comes up from the bottomless pit. The object of that judgment must appear, before the judgment can take place. The revelation of God that was given to John was very sweet to him. But when he meditates on the contents of the prophecy for his people, his soul is filled with bitterness.

Verse 11. The nations and the kings must appear again at the end to be the object of the last judgment. God has never lost sight of them. Those nations, those tongues, which are the result of the confusion of Babel (that is to say, all the nations spoken of in Genesis 10 and 11) reappear either in Daniel, or Ezekiel, or elsewhere, as in Psalm 83, in order to be the objects of judgment.

Chapter 11:1-18. There are worshippers and prophets, that is to say, a testimony. The Gentiles do their own will,

and tread the holy city under their feet. God has a remnant which is sealed, and He communicates with them. Verses 1, 3. We see here the altar of holocausts; the temple and the worshippers found therein are distinguished. The rest is trodden under foot.

Verse 2. Forty-two months. There is one week remaining out of the weeks of Daniel: seven weeks and sixty-two weeks to the time of the Messiah. The events of the last week are irrespective of what concerns the church. It is of this last week, as it is of the sixty-nine others; they were “determined” on the people of Israel and on the holy city; Dan. 9:24. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city.” Sixty-nine weeks were elapsed up to the Messiah, but He was cut off; Dan. 9:26. The church is a heavenly system, not providential, which has nothing in common with earthly things, or with the temple at Jerusalem.16 The remaining week remains still to be fulfilled. We have here the history of this last week.17 At that time, God will resume with the Jews His laws, His judgments, and His terrestrial government.

We now have something precise in statement—Jerusalem; a people at Jerusalem; the city trodden under foot by the Gentiles. These are Israel’s relations with God. Israel would not submit to Christ; they will submit to Antichrist. There is a small remnant who will not recognise Antichrist; but the mass of the people will recognise him. God is watching over this remnant whom He has sealed. I do not mean to say, however, that the sealed remnant is confined to these, for there are others of the twelve tribes that are sealed also. There is a testimony of God against men by prophets.

Verse 3. The two witnesses are prophets in affliction. Verse 4. God is Lord over the earth. He will not permit the times of the Gentiles to last any longer, nor that they should tread under their feet what they cannot devour. This is finished. God is going to shew Himself as Lord over the earth. He had given the earth to the Gentiles; Dan. 2:37. His throne had judged and left Jerusalem; Ezek. chaps. 1 to 11— particularly chap. 10:18 and chap. 11:22. And He gives the dominion over the earth to Nebuchadnezzar, to the Gentiles; Dan. 2:37, 38. And until the times of the Gentiles are expired, Jerusalem shall be trodden under their feet; Luke 21:24. But God will resume again His place as Lord over the earth. The two witnesses render testimony to this lordship, to the Lord over the earth, not to the Father, or to the heavenly glory, to the Lord of heaven.

In Zechariah 4 we see a candlestick. All is in order, and everything in its place. Christ's royalty and priesthood sustain and nourish the Jewish people, and all is in its place. But here all is in confusion. There are two candlesticks, two olive trees, but one does not know where to put them. Nothing is as yet settled; but there is a testimony rendered to these things, to their future fulfilment.

Verses 5-8. Such is the fate of the two witnesses, because the beast, the wicked one, assumes his empire, according to Satan's power. The witnesses give testimony to God's right over the earth. There is an allusion to the character of Moses and Elias. Egypt was visited with plagues under Moses; God's people were then in captivity under the dominion of the Gentiles. Moses displayed God's power against Pharaoh, in a way preparatory to the judgment that was to come on him.

Elias shut heaven, and made fire come down thence. Elias came at the time of the apostasy of Israel. The last condition of Israel is worse than the first. The spirit of idolatry, the demon of Israel, shall take with him seven other spirits worse than himself, and shall enter again into Israel. The service of the two witnesses is that of Moses against Pharaoh, and that of Elias in the midst of an apostate people. But the beast comes up out of the bottomless pit and kills the two witnesses. This is all that takes place before the sounding of the last trumpet. The particulars about Antichrist are revealed in the subsequent part of the Apocalypse.

It is a serious thing to see the end of the age, and the judgment coming, not on the dead, but on the nations; to see how men are despising all the judgments of God, and how everything concentrates itself in two witnesses, and a little remnant at Jerusalem. It is written that the publicans believed, having received the baptism of John. But the Pharisees reject this baptism and do not believe in Jesus, and they harden their hearts against the Holy Ghost; while the publicans, having received the first testimony, receive also Jesus and then the Holy Ghost. It is important to apprehend the least warning, to listen to the smallest whisper of God’s voice, and to obey quickly His warning. There are always warnings that we have neglected previous to chastisements.

Verse 14. Two woes are passed, and the third woe, which ends with the judgment of Antichrist, comes quickly. Verses 15-18. Seventh trumpet. The particulars of this woe are not given here; they are given a little farther on; but the seventh seal is the signal for the intervention of God. (See chap. 10:7.) When the sound of this trumpet is heard, the intervention is celebrated in

heaven with all its consequences. It is the result that is celebrated. The course of what is judged is reserved for what follows. This intervention18 begins with the judgment of Antichrist and that of the nations which are angry; but if it is with regard to them the moment when they are moved to anger, it is with regard to God's servants and His saints and His prophets the time when God is pleased, in His faithfulness and His love, to give them their reward. Great voices are heard in heaven praising God and rejoicing, because the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The four and twenty elders give thanks and worship God, because the Lord God Almighty has taken His great power and has entered upon His reign. There is great joy in heaven, because the reign of iniquity and of the prince of this world has come to an end; because creation, which from the time of Adam was made subject to vanity and to the bondage of corruption (Rom. 8:19-22), is come into blessing again, and, by the presence of the Last Adam, by the exercise of His blessed royalty and the manifestation of the children of God, and particularly because Jesus reigns—Jesus, hated by the world, Jesus despised and rejected of men, but Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father, the glorious Bridegroom of the glorified church!

Chapters 11:19; And 12

What precedes verse 19 of chapter 11 brings the general history of the ways of God to a termination. And before entering upon the judgments peculiar to the apostasy, the Apocalypse reveals to us more in detail what is to take place on earth. Verse 18 had brought us to the end—to the seventh trumpet. Verse 19 resumes

the history from a higher point. We have in what follows, first, the causes of evil, and what proceeds from those causes; secondly, the development of Satan's power and of the moving springs of evil in the instruments he uses, and which manifests itself under a very decided form; and thirdly, what God does in order to destroy the evil.

Chapter 11:19. The temple of God is seen open in heaven, and the ark of the covenant is seen in the temple. Before the evil is manifested, we have the joy that nothing can touch the ark, and that everything concerning the people of God is firmly settled and secured in heaven. In treating with His people God is binding Himself. This is the ark of His covenant. The power of God and His holiness must be manifested towards His people, and displayed in their favour. This is precious, for man's heart will fail him at the sight of evil. But before God lets the evil be seen, He manifests to the eye of faith His temple and the ark of His covenant, where everything is stable, where nothing can be touched. The thunders can fall on the earth, but they cannot fall on God's temple. It is no more the throne; it is the place for worship, the place where God is adored. The lightnings, the voices, the thunders, and the hail, are the action of God on the atmosphere of the earth, on what envelopes it. The terrors of God are acting on the world. The Apocalypse after this shews us the sources of evil, and the judgment of God on them.

Chapters 12, 13, 14 form a whole. Chapter 12 presents to us, in their great characters, the sources and the results; chapter 13 the development of evil on the earth, through Satan's instruments; chapter 14 God's relation with His people and with the world for good, and His

judgment on Satan’s instruments which chapter 13 had made known to us.

Chapter 12 is divided into three parts; the first, beginning with verse 1 down to verse 6; the second, from verse 7 down to verse 12; the third, from verse 13 down to verse 17. First part. Verses 1-6 place before us the actors in this scene, viz., a woman with child of Him who is the object of all the counsels of God, and the vessel of His power on earth, while herself weak (she is, according to His counsels, clothed with supreme glory); a child mighty, but who does not yet act in His might, but is hidden and withdrawn into heaven, while the woman flees into the wilderness; a great red dragon, Satan, who would devour the child, and who hates the woman and persecutes her. The woman is clothed with the sun, with the glory of God, with all supreme authority. The moon is under her feet; all subordinate and derivative authority is under her feet. She has upon her head a crown of twelve stars—power in man displayed to perfection.19 The second sign in heaven is a child, the heir of strength. The woman is not the church. There is a great red dragon who is against the woman; it is Satan who resists the manifestation of the glory of the child and of the woman. His power is perfect in its kind; he has seven heads, with crowns, and ten horns. The tail is designative of the bad influence of error in doctrine. The dragon draws after him the third part of the stars of heaven, the authorities. Satan would devour the child. The child is Christ; it is also the church, as associated with Christ. Like Christ she is to govern the nations; Psalm 2 and Rev. 2:26, 27. The church receives this power from her being associated with Christ; she will, notwithstanding, be also active in

heaven. When the Lord Jesus comes again, it will be in the display of His authority, for He shall rule all nations with a rod of iron, and the church will be with Him; Psalm 2:6-9; Rev. 2:27. It is what Christ will do when He has taken possession of the inheritance of the nations. Now, He looks for the church; John 17:9. Later, He will look for the world; Psalm 2:7. He makes the church to be partaker with Him in the possession of the world; Rev. 2:27. The male child then is Christ, the Head of the church which is His body. The Man complete is Christ and the church. Christ imparts to the church all He has; but the power of Christ is not yet displayed. Christ and the church are hidden in God. The woman, on the contrary, who was clothed with the sun, remains on the earth, and is in the desert. As soon as we are obliged to seek the woman on earth, it can be none else but the Jews. The church is only in heavenly places, she is not known on earth. Jerusalem is the centre where God recognises His people. It is the people of God, in relation with God, which becomes the woman on earth when the male child is in heaven. If we seek for the instruments on earth, we shall find that Christ was born of the Jews. In Zion it shall be said “This man was born there,” Psalm 87. We have the thought of God in the woman and the glory. We have, besides, the result of this thought, which is Christ. It is to the woman that Satan bears an ill-will; he hates her; but he cannot touch the child who is in heaven.

Second part, verses 7-12. We are told here the circumstances which force the woman to flee. Satan and his angels are in heaven; Eph. 6:12. Satan has access to the heavens which God created, where His throne is placed. It is there he was the accuser of Job; but Satan

has no entrance into the light, which cannot be approached. Jesus says, speaking of the miracles of His disciples, “I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven.” From a feeble sample of the power of His name He sees all the power of Satan cast out from heaven. A war takes place now in heaven. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels. Michael is called the archangel in Jude 9. The word of God speaks of only one archangel. The immediate result of this war is that Satan is cast out from heaven into the earth. He has no more power in heaven. It is a great mistake to beheve that Satan is in the lake of fire. He is with the angels in heavenly places. Men will be found in the lake of fire burning with brimstone before Satan is there; chap. 19:20. He shall be cast out of heaven into the earth, where he will still act and deceive the nations. He is already worshipped amongst the pagans. As soon as the event here anticipatively announced by prophecy takes place, the heavens are for ever cleansed from the defilement and presence of Satan. He was overcome by those on earth, as accuser, by the blood of the Lamb. Satan’s accusations only draw out the manifestation of God’s favour towards His children. Cast out from heaven, Satan shall come again on the earth to gather the nations from the four quarters of the earth to battle, and to make war against heaven.

Third part, verses 13-17. Instead of seeing, as in verse i, the woman in heaven, having the sun for a crown (that is to say, agreeably to the thought and the counsels of God, a vessel without strength, but clothed with supreme authority), we find her in the earth. Christ issued from the woman, the Jews. The church is in nowise the mother of Christ; she is His bride. When Satan is cast

out from heaven, he begins to make war with the seed of the woman, the Jews, the only testimony of God remaining then on earth.

Two wings of a great eagle are given to the woman. The strong man of God,20 Christ, does not yet exercise His power. The woman has nothing else to do but to flee for three years and a half, during which.time Satan exercises his power on earth with great fury. The only resource of the woman is to flee. Jesus foretold this in Matthew 24:16. As soon as the abomination that makes desolate shall stand in the holy place (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 11), three years and a half will elapse until the deliverance. At the beginning of these three years and a half the disciples are to flee to the mountains; Matt. 24:16. The woman fled to the desert. It is the last end of the indignation (Dan. 8:19) and of the vengeance; Isaiah 34:8; ch. 60:2; Jer. 50:15, 28; ch. 51:6, 22, etc.21 One cannot apply to the Roman eagles what is said of the abomination of desolation. Nothing, from the time Jerusalem was taken by Titus, coincides with the twelve hundred and ninety days in Daniel 12:11, even calculating, as some would do, twelve hundred and ninety years instead of twelve hundred and ninety days.

The serpent does all he can to kill the woman, even when she flees. There remaineth (v. 17) a remnant of the seed of the woman, with whom Satan shall make war. Those who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,* are those who have the Spirit of prophecy, who are attached to Jesus (that is to say, to the testimony of the Spirit of prophecy, which is God’s testimony to God’s promise, and not to Antichrist). The flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth is a mass of people; Isaiah 8:7, 8. When the king of Assyria

and all his glory come to lay waste through Judea, they are presented under the image of a flood and of waters strong and many. The earth swallows the flood which the dragon casts out after the woman. God, in His providence, prevents these nations from devouring and destroying Israel.

We have here the end of the last week in Daniel. What remains of the week is connected with the things of the earth. It still remains to be fulfilled. After the way which we find mentioned here, Satan will never regain heaven. After having been cast into the bottomless pit and bound there for a thousand years, he shall regain the earth and seduce the nations (chap. 20:8), but he will never regain heaven.

The inhabiters of the earth are never the church. They are those who are attached to the system of this world in the prophetic earth of the latter days, and who abide there. The inhabiters of the sea are the nations outside the prophetic earth. Those who thus inhabit the earth, without being righteous, have against them Satan in all his fury.22

Chapter 13

In chapter 12 we were taught, in the great sign that appears in heaven, what the sources of evil are. In chapter 13 we see the wicked instruments Satan makes use of for the fulfilment of all that iniquity and evil of which he is himself the source. The dragon imitates God, who has given all authority to His Son, and the Holy Ghost acting in His power in the presence of the Son. Thus Satan gives his power to a beast, and another beast exercises that power in his presence. One of the beasts comes from the sea, the other from the earth. We

have in these instruments the full display of evil working in the earth. The first beast has also his deadly wound healed, as Christ rose from the deadly wound of death.

First beast, verses 1-10. The sea represents a mass of people without form. When there is order, when population takes a definite shape, this is the earth. The sea represents the mass of people previous to its taking a definite form; chap. 17:15. Babylon is sitting on the seas, that is, on the people, the nations, and tongues. The Hon, the leopard, the bear, in Daniel 7, are the symbols of three of the four monarchies. When God's throne was no more at Jerusalem, God gave all power into the hands of the Gentiles. We see, to the end, four empires represented by four beasts. No mention is made here of the first three beasts, because they had already ceased at the time of the apostle.23 In the meantime, Jesus is hidden in God, and sitting at His right hand, according to Psalm no; Acts 2:30; Isaiah 9:5, 6, etc.

The Roman empire has become guilty of having rejected Him who alone had the right of dominion over the whole earth. This it is which gives a character to this beast. Nor is it all. This beast makes war with the saints that are on earth, at all times and under all circumstances, and persecutes in them the Lord Jesus. The Roman empire bears the character of the first three beasts, and combines their qualities in its body. The fourth beast shall be destroyed (Dan. 7:26), and the lordship shall be given to the Son of man by the Ancient of days; Dan. 7:11-14. This beast receives power from the dragon (chap. 13:2) and becomes Satan's immediate instrument.

As the Father has given all power to the Son, who acts in this power through the Holy Ghost, likewise the dragon gives his power to the beast, who exercises this power through another beast.

The first beast has seven heads and ten horns. Each horn represents a kingdom. Each kingdom is crowned. All these kingdoms agree in giving their power to the beast, in whom is an active principle of blasphemy. The Roman empire is to be divided into ten kingdoms, which give their power to the beast. This has not yet taken place. The Roman empire has fallen once, and has been divided, it is true, but this does not fulfil the prophecy. There has never been the union of the beast with the ten horns. When the barbarous nations of the fourth century were brought upon the scene, they destroyed the unity of the Roman empire. The co-existence of this unity with the ten horns has never taken place. Instead of giving their power to the beast, we must consider the barbarous nations, which are looked at as the ten horns which give their power to the beast, as its destroyer. This proves to us that it would be useless to look in the time past for the fulfilment of those things which the Apocalypse reveals to us here, and as to which Daniel 7 and Revelation 17:12-14 instruct us also. The fulfilment of these things is yet to come. They are prophetical things, not historical. We may omit the consideration of five heads as already fallen at the time of the apostle. There is one head contemporary with the apostle, and another to come. One of the heads is marked by a deadly wound, but it is to be healed, or, as it were, rise again. It is in everything an imitation of what God does, and of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. All the kingdoms from the west shall unite to give their power to the

Roman empire. All the earth, in admiration at the restoration of the Roman empire, shall follow after the beast. This has never happened yet. We have in Napoleon an image of this. It is like a prelude to the fulfilment of prophecy. There will be such an admiration, equal to adoration and worship, at the resurrection of this empire.

Besides what thus externally characterises it, there is (v. 5) a moral aspect, a mouth uttering blasphemies; Dan. 7:8. This dreadful time of the blasphemies of the beast shall last forty-two months. It displays its anger towards those who dwell in heaven. It is already thus in principle. If a Christian will walk as an inhabitant of heaven, the world cannot bear him. That will be still more dreadful then. A distinction must be made here between those who inhabit the earth, that is, the prophetic earth (whose hopes are upon the earth, and who are not dwelling there as pilgrims and strangers), and the nations, tribes, and tongues, by whom must be understood men in general. Those who inhabit the earth shall worship the beast, which is not said of the tongues, tribes, and nations.

The fate of those who inhabit the earth will be to worship the beast. The tongues, the kindreds, the people, and the nations, shall be under its authority; but they do not follow nor worship it; 2 Thess. 2:9-12. There is the coming of Antichrist, as there is also the coming of Christ. Strong delusion shall be sent to those who have not received the love of the truth, but who take pleasure in unrighteousness, that they should believe a he. They are those who inhabit the earth, the professing church, and not the heathen, to whom the truth never was set forth. The terms “power, wonders, miracles,” are the

same which Peter uses (Acts 2:22), to shew forth unto the Jews the power of Jesus. The same things will be displayed by Satan in evil, in order to accredit evil. It is an awful thing to see the world, rejecting the truth, have strong delusion sent unto them, so that they should believe a lie, and worship the beast to whom the dragon has given his power, because they refused to worship Christ to whom God had given His power.

What we read in verse 10 is a principle for Christians. The character of the patience and of the faith of the saints is not to resist at all. This is true at all times. If any one will use the arms of the flesh, he shall be made subject to them. Whosoever draws the sword shall perish by the sword.

Second beast, verses 11-13. It rises out of the prophetic earth, out of the nations who have a form. It bears the appearance of the power of Christ; its form is, as to its horns, like unto a lamb, but what it says is the voice of Satan. It has put on the form of the lamb, as to power, and yet its doctrine is that of the dragon. The second beast exercises all the power of the first in its presence. It performs wonders, like Elias, who made fire come down from heaven. It acts so as to appear to cause the judgments of God to come down upon men.

The form of a beast is not the last form that the second beast takes. It will appear at the end as a false prophet. We have here the first manifestations of it only. The first beast here is seen as a whole; but the end of the second beast is in the latter part of chapter 19, where the beast and the false prophet are taken; in which we can recognise evidently the two beasts mentioned in chapter 13. The second beast does not always retain the

character of its terrestrial and secular power. It teaches a doctrine, and, when it loses its power, it gives its influence; it falls as a beast and not as a false prophet.24 It is a person who exercises all his influence through his doctrine. He has lost his first character and his first power; no mention is made how he lost them. The power of the second beast was in his miraculous signs. The same influence is seen in the false prophet. The beast is recognised in him. It is a seducing influence, in order to deceive the inhabitants of the earth, and cause them to submit to the first beast, to the Roman empire, who is the immediate depositary of Satan's power.

It is the end of the inhabitants of the earth. If we are Christians, we are of heaven, and not of the Roman empire. Man thinks that if he could get rid of religion, the march of intellect would be more rapid, and he would be happier. Yes, there would be more activity of mind, but not one tittle of conscience. The mouth will be filled with blasphemies. Some think that Christianity will have the upper hand. No! unbelievers will have their desire, which is the object of their expectation. Man's faculties will produce wonderful things, but they will produce neither conscience nor happiness, nor eternal life; and man is only exalting himself to receive a more terrible blow, a more fearful judgment!

This is what is written in the word of God. Though the great whore shall be indeed destroyed (Rev. 17:16, 17), the result of her destruction will not be the conversion of those who shall have destroyed her, for the ten kings give their authority to the beast. These things must come to pass in order that the judgment of God may take place. Conscience even may throw us into Satan's arms, if we are not kept by the power of Jesus. In order

that none may escape the first beast, the second is there to deceive men and to make them believe a lie. We are told of those things that we may avoid the least details of that system of corruption which as yet has the appearance of Christianity, but which has the speech of the dragon. The image of the beast, in verse 15, is the image of the chief of the Roman empire, Antichrist.25 Verses 17, 18. I confess my ignorance as to the number six hundred and sixty-six. I cannot present you with anything satisfactory to myself. We find, answering to the number six hundred and sixty-six, the words ‘apostasy’ and ‘tradition’; but I cannot say anything positive on the point. Without saying greater spirituality might not discern it now, my impression is that it is a mark graciously given to assure the discernment of those exercised by it at the time.

May God give us to see and to mark the course which this world is running, and enable us to avoid all its influences! When one knows what will be the end of a thing, one avoids that which would lead to it. The end of Christendom is awful. God makes us acquainted with it in order that we may avoid it. The more I see what is taking place,26 the more I discover that things are hastening on, that evil may have the upper hand and be judged, that God may judge it and purify the earth. The iniquity must be full before God strikes; Gen. 15:16. We are in the last days in this respect. Men believe that there is great progress taking place, yet they feel great uneasiness in the expectation of what is going to happen. Christians must keep apart, living according to the principles of their heavenly calling.

Chapter 14

The preceding chapter gives the description and history of the great instruments of evil on the earth. This (which is the last of the three chapters, 12-14, which, taken as a whole, form, so to speak, a book) gives us the history of the ways of God on the earth, during the period of the beast up to the end of the judgments. We find ourselves here (not in heaven, as in chapter 12; not on the earth with the beast, but) on Mount Sion. God still acts in grace, not now with the view of gathering the church, but towards the remnant on the earth.

Verses 1-5. There are redeemed ones from amongst those of the earth; they are first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. Before the harvest is completely ripe, some of the first-fruits are presented to God. We are the heavenly first-fruits of the whole creation, to be with Christ, who is Head of the creation in a heavenly manner. But God's purpose is that there should be a bond between heaven and earth. Jesus is to unite all things in heaven and on earth. Sin has brought every thing into confusion and rent the tie. Jesus came; and He was, while on earth, a link between heaven and earth. The Holy Ghost came down upon Him. Heaven was open, because Jesus (the only one heaven could recognise) was on the earth. In John 1:51 the angels are seen descending on Him as the Son of man, which will be entirely fulfilled in the time of the glory of Jesus. Stephen saw heaven opened; but Jesus, who is the object of God's delight, was in heaven, where man is entered in Christ, and where man can find a place with Christ. When the Jews rejected the gospel, heaven was opened that the church, full of the Holy Ghost, might contemplate the glory of God. When Jesus was on the

earth, heaven looked on the earth; now that Jesus is in heaven, the church on earth looks on high. In a yet fuller revelation, as at the conversion of Paul, it is owned as one with Jesus, who is there.

Jesus has not given up His rights over the earth. The church is chosen by Him to be with Him in heaven and to share with Him His rights over the earth. Jesus is to reign and to unite the heavens and the earth. The beginning of this takes place here. The hundred forty and four thousand are on Mount Sion, and learn the song of heaven. In Sinai God required obedience from the earth. Mount Sion, on the contrary, represents kingly grace upon earth. After Israel had failed under Moses, under the judges, and under Saul, David became the king chosen of God to reign over His people. Jesus is to sit on David's throne. David carried the ark to Mount Sion in the city of David; 2 Sam. 6:12-19. It is written in Hebrews 12:22, "But ye are come unto Mount Sion," that is to say, not to heaven, but to the mount of royal grace [in opposition to Sinai], to the mountain where the ark of the covenant was, before the temple was built; Psalm 78:67-72. After Israel had been unfaithful, God made choice of David to feed His people. Mount Sion is the seat of that authority. The passage quoted above in the epistle to the Hebrews shews all the glory that will surround the Lord Jesus when He mounts the throne of David; and the epistle to the Hebrews tells us that we do not belong to the system of Sinai, where man fails, but to the system of grace.

John sees the Lamb on Mount Sion. We cannot enjoy God's favour but through the Lamb; and the suffering Lamb was the true Messiah and heir of David. Heaven is raising a song of joy, because the blessing of the earth is

beginning to appear. Those that are redeemed from the earth learn this song. It is a peculiar work and blessing before the general harvest. They are the ears of ripe corn, the first-fruits chosen and presented to God before the others. The hundred forty and four thousand are the only ones that can learn that song. Their ear is more quick to understand the things of heaven, and to be a link between heaven and earth.

In the Revelation “the earth” is always distinct from the world. The earth, where the light has already shone, is what is called the prophetic earth. Before God judges the nations, kindreds, people, and tongues (which are outside the earth), as well as those who inhabit the earth, there shall be given a new testimony—that of the angel who announces the judgments of God which are going to fall on the world (v. 6, 7). It is not here the gospel that gathers the church; it is the everlasting gospel. The testimony of the angel is, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” This testimony bears on the judgment of God, and is an appeal to the idolatrous nations to flee from this judgment. There is no question here of the message of salvation which God is now addressing to men by the preaching of the name of Jesus. To apply this passage to the present missions is to close the mouth of the angel who says “The hour of his judgment is come.” God, on the contrary, allows us time still to announce and to proclaim His grace towards poor sinners, and to preach the gospel to every creature. The time for this message is that of which the Holy Spirit says, “Behold, now is the day of salvation.” The gospel we have to preach gathers the church for heaven; that of

the angel announces the judgment to the earth. God always sends a special testimony before the judgment. He sent Noah before the deluge; He will act in the same manner before the judgment of the earth.

Verse 8 shews us the downfall of Babylon. This is not yet the fall of the beast. Babylon is the city of corruption, where everything has become merchandise, even the souls of men. The particulars of this judgment are seen a little farther on.

Verses 9-11. A third angel announces the chastisement of the inhabitants of the earth, who worship the beast. Men must choose between the wrath of God or that of the beast. The great proof of faith at that time will be in not worshipping the beast.

Verse 12. “Here is the patience of the saints.” There are times when one can walk quietly. An entire separation from the world, then, is that in which faithfulness would consist; but peace renders this difficult, because, the respective boundaries being easily forgotten, worldliness comes in. In times of persecution faithfulness consists in bearing testimony, and in not denying the Lord, nor His testimony, in order to escape the wrath of man and of the enemy.

Verse 13. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.” The question of dying for Jesus is settled in the happiness of those who die, in their glory and their return with Christ.

Verses 14-16 shew us the harvest of the earth. The harvest includes both good and evil. It is the end of the age. It concerns here only the earth. Two shall be found in one bed; one shall be taken for judgment, the other left, as it happened at the deluge and in Sodom. The

world is judged and separated from those that are faithful.

Verses 17-20. Fire always figures the judgment of God. Every one shall be salted with fire. The work of every one shall pass through the fire. The angel coming from the altar has power over the fire, over God's judgment.

There are three things to be remarked in what Scripture says of the vine. "The house of Israel is the vine of the Lord of hosts, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant," Isaiah 5:7. But this vine of Israel produced but sour grapes. John 15 presents to us Jesus as being Himself the vine on earth, the true vine; but He is rejected. It is because this vine is on the earth, that every branch which beareth not fruit is taken away. The question there is not concerning the elect for heaven, as such. A Jew might conform himself to the law, and yet produce no fruit. The question now is about bearing fruit. What we have in the Revelation presented to us here is a vine on earth, the form of the people of God in the earth; but each cluster is the object of the judgment and of the wrath of God. It is not a harvest in which you have to separate the good corn from the bad. There is nothing but what is bad in that vine, and there is an awful judgment of God "without the city," near Jerusalem, and in Edom; Isaiah 63:1-6. One does not understand how this passage could be applied to the work of Jesus on the cross. He is clothed with glorious apparel. He is in all the greatness of His strength. He treads the winepress, and tramples down the people in His anger. His garments are sprinkled with their blood, not theirs with His. It is then He redeems the Jews. At the cross His arm did not save Him. The vine, the form of religion in the earth, will be the object of judgment. This contains an

allusion to what took place amongst the Jews. In Leviticus 23 the feasts are presented to us in the following order:

Firstly. The Passover: Christ is our Passover. Secondly. Pentecost: the coming of the Holy Ghost has given us the reality of that feast; the Holy Ghost gathers the church as the first-fruits of creation. Thirdly. The feast of Tabernacles: this feast has not yet had its antitype. Several months of interval elapsed without feasts after Pentecost. In the seventh month which begins with the feast of trumpets, on the tenth day the people were to afflict their souls. On the fifteenth day began the feast of tabernacles, during which Israel lived in tents, in remembrance and as a testimony that Israel had been a stranger and a pilgrim in the desert—he who now was living in peace in the land of promise. The feast of tabernacles was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage were over, after the produce of the earth had been gathered. This harvest and this vintage are yet to come, and the true feast of tabernacles has not yet taken place.

To sum up things, Revelation 14 presents to us an elect people; grace acting, and a testimony rendered; the downfall of Babylon; a warning to those who shall worship the beast; the blessedness of those who die in the Lord; the harvest; and the vintage of the earth.

It is very instructive for us to see where all this leads, and what the end of it will be. All that which is of the flesh shall fall under God’s judgment. It is there that all men’s prospects and hopes end. There is also the consolation of being able to rise above these things, of seeing heaven open. The more death is our condition on

earth, the more also we shall see of heaven. If the power of the Holy Ghost carries us to bear a testimony that would lead us to death, we shall be a thousand times more happy, and we shall see heaven open for us. The principles of the corruption of the earth are all in activity. Faithfulness consists in fleeing from those principles whose fruits are clusters for the vintage of the earth.

Chapters 15, 16

These two chapters contain one and the same subject: namely, the vengeance of God. The seven vials are the vials of the wrath of God. They are still things preparatory. It is the wrath of God, and not yet that of the Lamb and His judgment. Chapter 17 is an episode on Babylon. Chapter 18 is the judgment of Babylon.

Chapter 15. The things presented to us in this chapter do not form a continuation of those contained in chapter 14. We have another sign. It is the description of the last plagues by which God will consummate His wrath against the inhabitants of the earth. They are preparatory judgments, which invite men to repent, but which, after all, only provoke anger. We do not yet see the Lamb here; it is not the manifestation of Jesus in Person.

Throughout the Apocalypse, we find the faithfulness of God towards His people before the execution of His judgments. No, it is impossible one hair should be lost, even if the faithful be killed. Satan can for a while kill the body, but all his power ends there. Verses 2 and 3 set before our eyes the symbols of things very affecting. The circumstances of the scene allude to the service of the temple. The sea of glass recalls to mind the brazen

sea in the temple. We have seen souls under the altar of burnt offerings. We are led here a little farther to the laver, the brazen sea, where the consecrated priests washed their feet, as Jesus washes the feet of those whom He has consecrated priests, after having been made a burnt-offering for them. This brazen sea represents purity. The sea here is filled with glass (that is, as transparent as the water was in the brazen laver) but it is solid. It is purity, but not now employed as an instrument of purification; it is firm, unalterable, on which they stand. (Compare chap. 21:18.) In our contact with the world we are always defiled. Our feet are on the earth. We are washed; but we walk on the earth that is defiled, and Jesus washes our feet. In the heavenly city we shall walk on purity itself. The whole city is purity. That is the nature of heavenly things. Those that are in the city are in contact, with the perfection of the purity of God. There is therefore no longer defilement nor purification. That is in the main what is seen in the elect (v. 2); they stood on the sea of glass. There is, moreover, the fire, because they had gone through the judgments of God. They had come out of tribulation under Antichrist. (See chap. 13:13-16). They had conquered—conquered even unto death. They had also shewn their faithfulness, and had not worshipped the beast. The faithful spoken of here form a distinct class. They are on a sea, as it were, of fire. In principle, this is the character of our tribulations. Water will not always suffice for the hardness of our hearts. Fire, chastisement, trial, become necessary; but trial would be of none effect if there were not the action of the Holy Spirit through the word. If I correct my child and he submits, the punishment ceases; if not, it continues. Therefore it is that we often see trials and chastisements

continue. We must then ask and accept that the inward work be perfected, and then the trial will be removed.

In chastisements the hand of God is applied to the soul exactly according to the state in which it really is. Abraham, being more faithful than Lot, escapes the sufferings of Lot. Lot's position was more trying. Unfaithfulness may be the occasion for God to manifest His ways, although he that is more faithful will be more blessed at all events. Faithfulness (although displayed in circumstances from which more faithfulness would have kept us) does not fail to have its reward; but it takes place in the midst of more sufferings.

Verse 3. There are two subjects for praise. We may sing the wonders of God, His works, as this was the case in Israel; or else we may sing the ways of God, as it is the case with the church. The church has not known the plagues of Egypt, the Red Sea, Sinai, as events happening to herself; these things are written for her instruction. She has the knowledge of the ways and of the thoughts of God. In the Jewish state, when under tutors and governors (Gal. 4:1-3), those things happened to them, but they were written for us; they were as children, they had need of palpable things. The Red Sea was not divided for us; but when Paul says "they were all baptised to Moses in the sea," I understand better than Israel what the Red Sea means, and I have in the event the knowledge of the intention and of the thought of God, which is evidently a much greater favour.

The faithful sing the song of Moses and that of the Lamb — the visible power of God over the Red Sea and in Sinai; and the glory of God in the Lamb, His faith and His obedience unto death, having been made subject for

a while to the power of the wicked. They sing the love of God, the ways of God, the glory of God—things manifested by His judgments, but concentrated in the cross of Jesus.27 “How marvellous are all thy works! Thy ways are ways of justice and of truth! “The saints have here these two things before their eyes: the works of God, the manifested deliverance of His people, His judgments over the wicked—this is the song of Moses; the purpose and the counsels of God towards His people —this is the song of the Lamb; Psalm 103:7. “God has made known his ways unto Moses; His acts unto the children of Israel.” Moses had seen on the mount the pattern of the things of God, the pattern of the tabernacle. The names given to God in verse 3 are those of Jehovah, a name revealed to Israel; and of Almighty, a name revealed to Abraham. It is the works of God that these names recall.

We see in verse 4 how the nations will be brought to God, namely, because His judgments will be fully manifested. Isaiah 26:9, 10 displays the same principle, a principle which is essential to the understanding of the ways of God in this respect. “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.” This is what we have set forth to us in the gospel; but when the judgments of God are upon the earth, the inhabitants of this world will “learn righteousness.” Judgment will devour the wicked, and the earth will be instructed thereby. The effect of the gospel will not be to render the inhabitants of the earth subject to God: the gospel is to gather the church for the heavenly glory. It is because the judgments are made manifest that the nations come and prostrate themselves before God.

Verses 5-8 open to us a new scene. The seven angels are clothed in pure and white linen; it is personal holiness. They have their breasts girded with golden girdles. Gold is the emblem of the perfect righteousness, of the justice, of God. The girdle is the sign of activity in service, or of that government and of that power over ourselves which would render us fit to act, and by its very character to execute this righteousness. Christ also is girded with a golden girdle. Here, it is not grace that is in activity; it is the wrath and vengeance of God.

Jesus had said, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19)—a position of faithfulness while the testimony lasts. There will be a time when God alone will testify of Himself, without any man’s testimony rendered to Him; it will be a testimony of vengeance, because His power and His righteousness have been despised by man.

The vials are given by the four living creatures. The smoke from the glory of God is a testimony of power and majesty; but it obscures and hinders any relations with God, and no one at that time can draw near Him. God does not appear there, either in the ark or in Christ, where He is reconciling man to Himself, and dwells in Israel. It is a time of majesty and not of grace.

In chapter 16 the vials are poured out. The prophetic earth is here the object of judgment—the earth, where God made Himself known, and where He has been rejected. The vials of His wrath are to be poured out upon the impenitent inhabitants of that earth. When God alone can render a testimony to Himself, because every other testimony has been rejected, all the world must undergo the vengeance of God.

Chapter 16. You will recollect that we have been particularly occupied with those that are on the sea of glass, who escape the judgment, and are singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. They had expressed in their song that the judgments of God were fully manifested. The angels come out of the temple for the execution of these judgments. We have distinguished between the wrath of God which falls on the earth, without Christ being manifested, and the judgment and the wrath of the Lamb manifested in person. The manifestation of the Lord Jesus and of His judgment is something quite distinct from the wrath of God; and when God has acted in His wrath, all is not over. God manifests solely His glory through the instruments He has chosen, and it is not then the time to enter into the temple. The wrath of the Lamb, which is subsequent to these events, falls on the beast, who is brought on the scene in a peculiar way after this.

Verses 1, 2. The scene is altered. Before, it was the beast who persecuted those who had not its image: now, God is acting, and smites those that had persecuted and such as had submitted themselves to the power of the beast. The sun here is only the supreme authority over the earth—that which shines on the earth and on this prophetic scene of judgments. The inhabitants of the earth had worshipped the beast and persecuted the saints and the prophets. When the vial of the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth, it strikes those who had worshipped the beast and received its mark. An allusion is here made to what took place in Egypt. A malignant and dangerous ulcer, misery and anguish reach those who would not bow down to the Lord Jesus, who preferred ease upon the earth and the lie of Satan.

Thus it is that men blind themselves, and then God sends judicial blindness. He hardened Pharaoh's heart and made fat the heart of Israel. God will do likewise to the world which calls itself Christian, and which is rejecting His warnings and despising His judgments. God gives them up to a lie, and then sends His judgments upon them. The end of the Christianised world is seen in the remaining part of the book. The more I read those passages, the more I am astonished how those who read them can do so without learning from them that all we see around us is coming to an end, and an end in condemnation. Verses 3-7. The second angel pours out his vial on the sea, on the nations which are outside the prophetic earth. The earth is the theatre where things of a moral character in the creation are resolved. Infidels have often made a comparison between the importance of this earth and that of other stars; but in this they have only shewn the folly of their wisdom. It is in man and in this earth that all moral questions of God's justice, and of His wisdom, and of His love, are resolved. The importance of the battle does not proceed from the place where it is fought, but from the principles which it decides. Here it is that all which manifests the dominion of God and the power of evil is brought into evidence by the death and resurrection of Jesus. During the time of the Jewish dispensation, Judea is the scene of the manifestation of God's ways; it is then called "the earth." Now, "the earth" is Christendom, where God's ways were also displayed. "The sea" is the mass of the nations dispersed outside this prophetic earth. There is a universal judgment upon those nations. The rivers represent people made distinct the one from the other, as under the influence of certain principles. Thus it is said, the fountain of Jacob.

The blood out of the body is death. Death is the character of the judgment which falls on those nations. Moses changed the water into blood. With regard to those mentioned here, the principle of their life and of their being before God is death. They are given death to drink. They shed the blood of the saints, of the righteous, and God gives them up to death (v. 6, 7). The voice comes out of the altar, because it is there, so to speak, that the souls that have been persecuted, and of whom God is taking vengeance, were (so to speak) offered to Him. The expression “as the blood of a dead man” gives the most awful idea of death. In the body is the blood, is the life. That which ought to sustain life becomes the expression of death. Verses 8, 9. The sun, the power which rules over the earth, becomes intolerable, and scorches men as with fire.

Verse 10. When judgment comes alone, it does not produce repentance. God has had patience with the world, and this patience has delayed the return of Jesus. The apostles had been taught by God to wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. Man finds that the Lord delays His coming; but, when the church holds this language, she begins to do her own will, and to enter into fellowship with the world. From the moment the servant says within his heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming,” he beats his fellow-servants, and begins to eat and to drink with the drunken; he becomes unfaithful and worldly. It is true the Bridegroom does delay His return; nevertheless, we must wait; and those who are like men waiting for their master shall reap according to their expectation. If we give up waiting for Him, we prepare ourselves a part with the hypocrites. The waiting for Jesus was that which at the beginning detached the

heart from the world, and rendered faithful. The Christian religion has made its way into the world, in consequence of this faithfulness, and of this detachment from it. If we wish to act with power over a mass of men, we must be above their range of character. The church is not to adopt the principles of men—she is to manifest God. The looking for the Lord is what distinguished the earlier Christians, and separated them from the world. Who will have the better part, those who have acted thus, or such as have said, My Lord delayeth His coming? As soon as such language is held to us, a principle is proposed which falsifies our position as Christians. And although He does in fact delay His coming, yet those who are waiting for Him are fulfilling His intention, and those who do not wait for Him shall be made ashamed.

God has patience towards the world, and waits, because He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But the judgment comes sooner or later. I see evidently that men oppose the doctrine of the coming of Jesus, or at least that they would wish to persuade themselves that He is not coming so very quickly. This is the principle of the unfaithful servant, and this principle leads the Christian to mix with the world; whereas the looking for the coming of Jesus separates the Christian from the world. God has had patience. He has given warnings; and, when these judgments strike men, men blaspheme. When the will is not subdued, the heart is always made bitter through chastisements.

Verses n, 12. The fifth angel smites the seat of the beast, not the beast itself. The irritation of man’s heart against God has become excessive, and men gnaw their tongues in their frenzy. The kingdom of the beast, which had

made such fine promises, is filled with anguish. It is even so now with God's enemies, their conscience is gnawing them.

Verse 12. The sixth angel pours out his vial upon the great river Euphrates. We see evidently that the beast is not destroyed, although its empire is rendered miserable. There is an interval here, as after the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet. The river Euphrates, which is the barrier of the prophetic earth on the side of the east, is dried up. The barrier falls, and the kings from the east can enter.

Verse 13 presents to us the direct power of Satan, the dragon, the direct enemy to Jesus, the Christ; the power of the beast, the Roman empire in its state of revolt against God; the power of the false prophet. Unclean spirits proceed from them and go to the kings of the earth. All that which governs and directs in the earth will be gathered by these three unclean spirits. It is not then Christianity that will embrace the world by its influence; on the contrary, it is the diabolical influences which gather the inhabitants and the powers of the earth. It is very evident that unclean spirits are not the gospel; and there is not a greater illusion than to believe that the Christian religion will extend to, and embrace, the world. It is undoubtedly through judgments that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (not the knowledge of His grace) shall cover the earth; Hab. 2:14. It is easy for men to say, We shall fill: but this is not said. It is written "For the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." This does not mean that the gospel is not to be preached. If I believe that the judgment will come quickly and fall on Christendom, this will urge me to bear testimony according to the mind of God, and not

according to the illusions of men. See the judgment that is coming, and seek with all your might to draw sinners away from the wrath to come. When we see infidelity more and more openly manifested, and a testimony designed to rescue men from the ways of wickedness, it is a proof that judgment is drawing nigh. If three thousand souls were converted in one day, it was because Jerusalem was going to be given up.

Verse 15 contains another warning. I do not know anything satisfactory as to the word Armageddon mentioned in verse 16. Compare Judges 5:19 and 2 Kings 23:29; but the first passage rather. We see from verse 17 to verse 21 the great upsetting and confusion of the nations. All that which seems strongest and most elevated (mountains) is overthrown. A direct judgment from God falls upon man. All the foundations of the earth, as a system half moral and half civil, are thrown down. What a blessing for the Christian to have assured peace, to know that, having kept the word of the patience of Christ, he shall also be kept from the hour of temptation; and the more the storm is raging outside, the more there is calm and tranquillity in the house of God! We have on our side the immutability of the throne itself, from whence proceed these judgments, and these judgments do not touch us. This is the joy of the child of God. The peace of God keeps him in the midst of the awful time coming on the world.

Chapter 17

We have now entered on the scenes of the last judgments, which God is to fulfil in order to introduce the glory of Jesus. The seven vials have accomplished the wrath of God. The Spirit of prophecy gives with

more detail the two forms of evil developed at the end—Babylon and the beast. Things are more simple and more easy to understand than at the beginning of the Apocalypse. When evil becomes openly manifest, the thing is more evident; for the winding up of the scene of this world interests more particularly the church.

Verse i. In speaking of heavenly things, one speaks of things that are not yet as though they were, for God has foreseen and judged everything. Heaven is familiar with evil as judged, as with that which is good to enjoy it. God has taken notice of everything beforehand; and all is found on the path to His glory. The angel is familiarly acquainted with all that relates to the great whore. To us this is not clear and must be explained. All that happens to us is foreknown and pre-arranged of God, in order that His child may stand in the midst of difficulties. All I have to do is to say—God is perfectly acquainted with the position I am in, and He knows the way He has prepared to extricate me out of difficulties if I remain faithful. In all things present your requests to God, knowing that He cares for you. John could not so much as even imagine such a thing as this great whore; she has the double character of corruption and influence over the nations.

Two things are contained in this chapter: Babylon and the beast; corruption and the power of evil in violence. Man’s will manifests itself in two ways—corruption and violence: this was the world’s state at the time of the deluge. Satan is a liar and a murderer. The Lord Jesus is the truth and the life, instead of being a liar and a violent man. Antichrist does his own will. Jesus does the will of Him that sent Him. Here is corruption, violence, self-will, and murder. Babylon is corruption in all its

depth; and the beast is self-will, revolting even against God Himself. These two principles, which have been from the beginning, are embodied, and act.

Verse 2. The kings of the earth are the powers where light has shined, the powers of the last prophetical scene of monarchies. Verse 3. Babylon is centre of commerce, of riches, the capital of the vanities of the world, the mother of idolatries; but as to the Spirit of God, it is a desert (v. 3). He finds nothing in the world that can satisfy the holy desires of a renewed heart. What the flesh or the natural man loves, the Spirit hates. What is desirable to the natural heart is only a desert and corruption to the Spirit.

The beast, having seven heads and ten horns, is the Roman empire. The woman is here seated on the beast, and rules it. This is the relationship between the moral corruption of this world and the civil powers. Later these relations are changed. In the Old Testament Babylon poisons the nations. Here also she is the centre to which the nations are attracted, the centre of the corruption, the luxury, and the glory of this world. It is also the centre of religious idolatry; Dan. 3.28 This system of corruption at the beginning rides the beast, and rules it. The kings of the earth find it profitable for themselves to sustain this relationship with the woman; corruption governs.

The names of blasphemy are varied characters of self-will and of rebellion in the beast which opposes God.

Verse 5. We see in Babylon the spring of all corruption. She is the cause that all the relationships that ought to subsist with God, are sustained with the world. She

leads men to abandon the true God; they may give themselves up to idols.

Verse 6. The secular power puts the saints actually to death; but it is Babylon who is guilty. She is drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs, the witnesses of Jesus. As it was once Jerusalem that was guilty of the blood of prophets, so it is now in Babylon that the blood of the saints is to be found. It is here we find the principle of that religion which is connected with the world, and has its resources there. It is the most hateful thing in the sight of God.

Verse 7. John is marvelling that that which had the form of godliness and the name of religion should be guilty of the blood of the martyrs. It must have been no less amazing to a Jew that God should require of Jerusalem the blood of the prophets. In the sight of God one generation inherits of the preceding generations all the iniquity which they have completed. Their conscience ought to be warned by this iniquity. “Ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers,” says the Lord. If Christians are not entirely separated from Babylon, they inherit the iniquity of the preceding times, because they join themselves with it, their conscience not gathering any instruction from it. When man has exhausted one principle, God presents him with another to work upon his conscience: and, if he rejects it, he is so much the more guilty. In Abel nature is violated; afterwards, the traditional knowledge of God; Rom. 1:18-23. Afterwards it is the law; and then it is Jesus Himself who comes to put the heart to the proof. When the knowledge of the Father and of the Son is introduced, the Jews then seek to shew their faithfulness

to God by killing those who introduce this knowledge. Man glories in a truth that costs him nothing inasmuch as it is generally received, and takes advantage of it to oppose the admission of more light which would demand faith. The Jews insist on the unity of God. in order to deny the Son. When we appeal to a truth that was blessed to us at one time, in order to refuse another sent now, it is rejecting the means by which God will act now. It was the bigoted Jews, not the heathen, that opposed themselves most to the introduction of Christianity.

Sincerity alone will not do. The new light must be admitted. They will kill you, “because they have not known the Father nor me,” John 17:3. Thus it is that the most precious light becomes the instrument of evil in the hands of infidelity. This principle is very important for those who are acting in the kingdom of God. From verse 8 the angel leaves the woman, to give us the history of the beast.

The contents of verse 8 had already been announced in a less clear manner before. When the Roman empire is spoken of, it is said that it exists no more. Here we find this difficulty foreseen, pointed out, and explained. Here is the key to the enigma, with the certainty that He who gave it invented the enigma also.

The Roman empire is to come out of the bottomless pit, from the region of darkness, and act with power for evil. It is a very serious matter to see at the end the power, which has dominion over the earth, come up out of the bottomless pit itself. The inhabitants of the earth shall marvel at this kind of resurrection of the Roman empire, and then it is that the world shall follow after the beast; chap. 13:3. It will be seduced when the beast shall have

taken the character of the resurrection of the Roman empire destroyed centuries ago.

Verses 9, 10. There is a certain likeness between the woman and the beast. A woman, a city built on the perfection of power, on seven mountains, represents the centre of corruption. The beast has seven heads also. The heads are kings, or powers of government. Five are fallen—five kings, or five forms of government. The particular facts which have accomplished parts of this are of little importance. History is not necessary in order to understand prophecy. It is even oftentimes an obstacle, because what is often important to man is not so to God, for God has Christ in view.

Although history fulfils prophecy, yet it never explains it; whereas prophecy explains history. The faithful are called to believe in the prophecy before it is fulfilled. The way to understand the word is to have the mind of God, and to apprehend His purposes with respect to Christ. At the time of the apostle five kings had already fallen. The sixth was there. A seventh was to come for a short time.

Verse n. The eighth head of the beast is the beast itself, the whole power of the beast concentrated in the person of the chief. It is the Roman empire brought to life again through Satan, with a diabolic character, but which shall be destroyed. There will be a restoration hereafter of the Roman empire, and this restored empire shall be destroyed by the power of God. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 the man of sin is called the son of perdition.

Verse 12. The ten horns have their power the same time with the beast. The kingdoms that arose out of the destruction of the Roman empire through the barbarians

were not the prophetic horns. The trouble men have taken on this subject has been to no purpose. The barbarian kings destroyed the Roman empire instead of exercising their power at the same time with it. There will be a kind of confederation of kings with a centre, that is, a head exercising power in the midst of them.

Verse 14. These kings will make war with the Lamb; but the Lamb, who is the King of kings, shall overcome them. The church shall accompany Him. The called, the elect, and the faithful, these are they who shall be with Him.

Verse 16. The horns.29 They shall hate the whore, and shall eat her flesh, and make her desolate and naked. They are tired of her, and cannot endure her any longer. Man thinks that, if he could get rid of this outward and corrupted form of Christianity, he would be blessed. It is the contrary. When the ten kings have made the whore desolate and naked, they give their kingdom to the beast. The kings of the earth will not give their power to Christ: quite the contrary; they will give it to the beast, and will make war with the Lamb. It is inconceivable how those who read the word of God can entertain the thought that the kings of the earth shall give their power to the Lamb. If one could succeed in destroying the whore, there would be no other result than to make war with the Lamb. It is important the church of God should not be deceived in this respect. God is warning us, in order that we may escape the way that leads to perdition.

This chapter is divided into three essential parts: the woman, who becomes the centre of corruption, and who exercises her influence over the mass of people; the

beast, which has ascended out of the bottomless pit; the ten kings, who30 persecute the woman, give their power to the beast, and fall in making war with the Lamb.

A distinction is to be made between the expressions the woman and the whore. That Rome has been the centre, this I do not doubt. The woman is the city; but the whore embraces a whole system of corruption that has varied forms, and of which the spirit of worldliness, long covered over under the form of religion, is the over-ruling principle. In this chapter the whore is more particularly shewn to us under her religious form.31 Her flesh is eaten, and she is no more seated on the beast, because the kings give their power to the beast, and the beast itself rules.

It is important to avoid these principles and forms that lead to perdition. The chosen, the called, and the faithful are with the Lamb when He destroys the beast and the kings. This is exceedingly precious, and separates from the spirit of this world. A heathen is not in Babylon. He cannot be there. A Christian may be found there. Whatever connects the world with religion is the principle of Babylon. The spirit of Babylon, the spirit of worldliness, is very slippery ground. Therefore it is that we are warned of God. May God keep us!

Chapter 18

We have seen that at all times there is lying and violence, Babylon and the beast. Satan was from the beginning a liar and a murderer. From the beginning of chapter 17 to chapter 19:10 we see the contrast between Babylon and the New Jerusalem. In order to shew us the judgment of the whore, the Spirit has presented to us, in chapter 17, the woman and the beast

in their relations one with the other. Here, in chapter 18, Babylon is shewn to us standing alone, that the judgment on her may be revealed.

The great principle seen in Babylon is worldliness, but worldliness as a position of captivity for the people of God, in connection with the prostitution of man's natural affections. In the Old Testament fornication is applied to trade, not to trade with an eye to provide for wants, but to the spirit of trade to make a gain of it. Tyre is a proof of this. Idolatry was, properly speaking, the sin of adultery32 for Jerusalem, because the Eternal was her husband. In the church it is called prostitution, because the marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place; but there is more moral connection than one thinks, because the heart is at a distance from God, and conscience likewise, by the allurement of gain and covetous-ness, which is idolatry; Eph. 5:5 (see also Phil. 3:13-20). The most abominable form of worldliness is that of those who call themselves Christians, separated unto God by the blood of the Lamb, and are living in worldliness, after the principles of the world who rejected the Lord Jesus. We are speaking of moral analogies. We have already seen how idolatry characterises Babylon, the abominations meaning idolatry.

The Revelation is almost entirely borrowed from the Old Testament; so that we derive much light from the Old Testament for the understanding the book of Revelation. Babylon is the enemy of Jerusalem. Israel came out from Egypt. Egypt is the world in its natural state; this is not so with Babylon.33 Babylon was, from the beginning, the spirit of worldliness, presenting the allurements of this world to the heart come out of Egypt. It was a goodly Babylonish garment which attracted the heart of

Achan; Josh. 7:21. When the king of Babylon sent unto Hezekiah, because he had heard that he had been sick and was recovered (2 Kings 20:12; Isaiah 39:1), Hezekiah shewed all that was found in his treasures to the men that the king of Babylon had sent him. But Isaiah said unto him, “All that which thy fathers have laid up in store shall be carried to Babylon.” As soon as the church will extol herself before the world through things pertaining to it, she will, as is besides always the case, fall under the influence and under the power of the world. Later Babylon is presented in her power, and the people of Israel captive under it. There is the idolatry, the golden statue, and all kinds of riches. Babylon is the centre of idolatry, and of the power of the world. She fell by the power of Cyrus, and the people of God were delivered to a certain extent. Such are, in the Old Testament, the features of Babylon. Babylon is the power of this world, which makes a traffic of everything of the world, which has been exalted because of the iniquity of the people of God, and where the people of God have been found in captivity. When the church becomes worldly, the world has always the advantage over her.

What we find in Revelation 18 is not Babylon in her glory, but in her downfall. It is the judgment of Babylon; v. 2, 3. She has for a season enjoyed the pleasures of the earth. After her downfall she becomes a habitation of demons; and, at the same time, it is said to the people of God (v. 4), “Come out of her, my people.” Israel has been, through the judgment of God, captive in Babylon. When Babylon fell, Israel came out of her. If I discern Babylon, I am called to come out of her. Verse 8. The people of God are called upon to reward her, even as she

rewarded them, and to double unto her double according to her works. And the church in heaven is called to rejoice over her, because the Lord God has judged her (v. 20).

Why does the Spirit of God enumerate all these articles of luxury and commerce? (v. 11-13). It is in order to describe unto us what is the occupation of the children of Babylon. All was merchandise to her. She was the centre of all those things which the inhabitants of the earth enjoy. And if the bodies and the souls of men could help in any way to this enjoyment, they also would be made a traffic of. All is made then a matter of gain, of pleasure, and of commerce of this world. This spirit is seen already, although all these details are not yet visible. To traffic and to become rich, there is the spring of all the actual politics of the world; and if the traffic of souls can serve to that end, it matters not, provided the aim be attained to make much gain and to embellish this world, of which Satan is the prince. The more facilities increase to satiate this thirst after gain and luxury, the more the souls of men will be devoured with the lust after them. The world must be everything, and the prince of this world must rule without obstacle, and everything must yield to this. Nothing is more melancholy than to see that everything is to be made a matter of selling and of buying, that this is the end of everything in this world, and that everything yields when the question is a matter of gain. This annihilation of all principle through the spirit of gain leaves an open field to the ascendancy Satan has over the hearts of men to enslave them under his dominion. It is to be feared that the hearts of Christians may be carried away by these principles; for the principles of the world take

possession, to a certain point, of Christian hearts. They glory even in them.

There was not only positive hatred and murder in Cain's heart, but also the character of the prince of this world. He built a city and embellished the world; Gen. 4:16. Satan rules over the hearts of men through these means, and thus becomes the prince of this world through means of all the pleasures of life, which the world calls innocent pleasures. They say, Why, what harm is there in riches, in music, in drawing, and in so many other things? Why, that Satan, by their means, rules the world and enslaves the hearts of men for eternity. This is the character of Babylon. It is an abominable thing when a Christian can put up with Babylon's principles, and conform his taste to them.

This corruption and this system of pleasure are especially evil for us, inasmuch as all these things are done when man, having been driven from the presence of God, and gone out from before the face of the Lord, has done his best in arranging the world, in forming a polite society, in cultivating arts, and creating pleasures, etc. God has presented to the world His own Son as Heir of all things, and the world has rejected Him. But the Father receives the rejected Son, and the world is found in direct opposition to God. After having killed his brother, and being cast out of the presence of God, Cain embellishes the world. The world had already been sinning against God; but, like Cain, it added to this the murder of Him who, in grace became man. Jesus is not of the world, but of the Father. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee," John 17:25. What characterises the disciples is, that they follow the Son to heaven, are heavenly-minded, and not of the world. "All

that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world," 1 John 2:16. The Father is opposed to the world, the Son to Satan, the Spirit to the flesh. So far as the Christian enters into the ways of the world, it is a complete prostitution. When the world is in the place of the church and holds the church in captivity, the full character of Babylon is then unfolded, although she was already Babylon before she did it and in order to do it. Whatever makes the world happy in spite of God is in the spirit and course of Babylon, and for the Christian to be there is to be in Babylon. The world may get rich without our having anything to do with it; but when a goodly Babylonish garment is found in the tent of Achan, then the whole camp is corrupted, and God judges it. When friendly associations begin to take place between Babylon and the people of God, it is an indication that all Hezekiah's riches are going to be transported there. When Hezekiah is rich enough to make a display of his treasures, the principles of the world are working in him, and judgment begins already. When Babylon becomes guilty of carrying Israel away captive, the people of God are already without power.

Verse 4. The misfortune of the people of God is to have any part in the sin of Babylon; and the only way to avoid having any part in it is to come out—to come out of her, not to be made partaker of her sins, and so not to receive of her plagues in consequence. We come out of her because of her sins and not to be partakers in them, not because her plagues have arrived. It is evident that true Christians, the church, have become worldly. God has had long patience. Babylon falls when Belshazzar is boasting, not merely of having the people of God

captive, but also of having prevailed over God. When Babylon fell, the people of God were there; this is what will take place again, though the rapture of the church is to take place first.

The spirit of worldliness opposes itself to the testimony of God, and is guilty of the death of those who have borne testimony to Jesus. The more religion there is in the world, the more obstinately it is set on putting to death those who bear testimony to Jesus. When Nebuchadnezzar made the golden statue, he threw the Hebrews into the furnace. When Jesus Christ is preached, it is the Jews who go from one city to another urging the heathen to persecute the Christians. It is they who pursue to that end the apostles from town to town. That which least bears the light of God is what assumes to be the religion of God without being so. If Jesus be the Son of God in heaven, what have the Jews done? Babylon is the spirit of worldliness cast out far away from God, as guilty of the death of Christ, and which nevertheless gives itself up to embellish the world. Thus the Christ, as the light, is extinguished by the spirit of worldliness. Babylon slays the prophets and the saints. Not being the true God, and there being no possibility of her being of Him (otherwise she would no more be Babylon), she makes use of idolatry, enforcing it as a means to establish unity: that is what Nebuchadnezzar did. Such are the great principles of Babylon; and those who do not act from consceience must undergo the yoke of this prosperous worldliness, which traffics even in the souls of men. The testimony remains with us that the world is not of the Father, that Christ is not of the world, and that the world will be judged (v. 8).

Until the judgment of God falls upon the world the world will prosper more and more. This is not yet fully accomplished. But we are warned that we may flee from all those Babylonish principles by which society is embellishing and arranging itself without God, and which leads it even to make a merchandise of conscience.

May God keep our hearts from being made partakers of her sins, that we may not also receive of her plagues! All those Babylonish principles, all that your eyes may lust after for your drawing-rooms and for your pleasures, all those things separate you from heaven. All that is of the world which rejected Christ. Would you perhaps like to be of Babylon on a small scale? As the Spirit is opposed to the flesh, the Son to Satan, so is the Father likewise to the world. It is the power of heavenly affections which takes away the desire after these carnal things.

There are still in Babylon other principles which I have not yet brought under notice. Genesis 10 and n give us the enumeration of all the families of the earth, and their divisions. We find therein two great principles which characterise the natural energy of the human heart in doing its own will, viz., the spirit of despotism, and the spirit of association. Nimrod, the first example of individual supremacy, begins to be mighty in the earth; Gen. 10:8. Nebuchadnezzar, the first chief among the four monarches, exercises by a strong will dominion over his fellow men. On the other hand man does not like to be governed, and he associates himself with others in order to make himself entirely independent of God. Associated with others, he thinks himself capable of everything. “Union,” he says, “is strength.” And this is true until God intervenes. Men associate together to

make themselves a name upon earth; that is the spirit of association. But, when God had scattered men, Nimrod took possession of all they had done. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel; Gen. 10:10. God recognises (Gen. 11:6) the power of the principle of association; but this is the proper principle of Babylon. Man will associate, and, by his own will united to that of others, get some reputation. This spirit of union has no other object than man's glory.

For the church there is true unity— "one Spirit and one body." This unity has the Holy Spirit as the power of life, and Christ as the centre of all. Christianity alone could give great force to individuality and to conscience, and at the same time unite men under the direction of Christ towards one centre, which is Christ. This could only be possible by the Holy Spirit, which takes away selfishness, while it gives power to the conscience; giving, by faith, an object to the heart outside of itself— an object which acts on the individual conscience, and unites us all through one predominant affection to one centre of affection, by one life, and one only power of the Spirit.

The unity of Babylon is of quite another nature. It tends to the glory of man, who desires to gather men around one system, which the wisdom and the prudence of man have invented. Babylon will always have a chief. After God had scattered Babel, one man took into his own possession all those scattered wills, united them under his own will, and made them obey. Under the two forms of association and of despotism, it is man who will make himself a name. Conscience is not exercised; there is neither root nor fruit. Conscience does not admit of anything between God and itself. All that man can do, as

an instrument, is to put the conscience or the heart in relationship with God. During a long period the spirit of this false Babylonish unity has been outwardly religious; it is none the less for all that the spirit of Babylon.

The spirit of association is very powerful in these times. Commercial association governs everything, and a desire for union is everywhere proclaimed. Man will succeed in a wonderful manner; but all this will only end in the confusion of the will of man, and in his submission to Antichrist, as the last chief. The remedy to all this is conscience. The Holy Spirit acts as the spirit of union in the children of God: but conscience cannot be in society and reject its own individual responsibility. It is individual: otherwise God could not be the Master of conscience. The Holy Spirit directs it towards Jesus. If we will avoid the principles of evil, it must be through conscience; there is no other way. Through it we are rendered wise concerning that which is good and simple concerning evil. The Christian who acts from conscience will avoid a thousand snares of which he is not at all aware.

This Babylon, of which we have seen the glory, will be the object of the judgment of God. When this takes place, every enemy will not yet be destroyed. The eighth head of the beast still remains. God still exercises the patience of His children. Babylon is a harlot, not an adulteress. Israel was an adulteress, when unfaithful; but the church corrupted is a harlot, because the marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place. Jehovah was the Husband of Israel. His presence was there, and earthly blessings flowed from it. However, man’s folly threw him into idolatry. The bride of the Lamb is not yet formed in its heavenly completeness. The assembling of

the universality of the church is not yet completed, neither is it yet risen. The church has still to be in a waiting posture. And as it is not agreeable to wait without possessing, the church would have, like Judaism, some enjoyments in the earth. But the more there is of the Spirit, the more on the contrary there will be suffering, and the more we shall be put in front of the battle. The church, having ceased to look for the return of the Bridegroom, would have pleasure and enjoyment in the world, and has corrupted herself. It is because the system of earthly blessing has failed in Israel that the church has been introduced. The church has only the earnest of her future possessions. Hers is a waiting position. Satan has confounded all this, and has lowered the thought of devotedness in the church. In the beginning no one said that what he had belonged to him. Later one sees, through the epistles, warnings given to the rich; 1 Tim. 6:17-19. Afterwards the church would be rich. The wise virgins slumbered. Satan came in, and the prince of this world has become a prince in the church, even her true members being almost all lost in the corruption. And it is in this corrupted church that Satan is found, and that souls of men even have been sold. At last the kings will not have anything more to do with the harlot.

The beast itself having put away the harlot, and she herself being destroyed, the beast will itself make war with the Lamb. It is the Roman empire brought to life again, the eighth head of the beast, which makes war openly with the Lamb. It is no more simply corruption; it is violence. Isaiah 14:12-17 shews us the king of Babylon taking all the titles and the characters of Christ. He would seat himself on the mount of the congregation (at

Jerusalem) in the palace of the great king on the sides of the north. He claims all that belongs to Jesus, and assumes to be made like Jesus. He will raise his throne above the stars, ascend above the clouds, be like the Most High. This is a recapitulation of the titles of Jesus, and the boldest form of the pride of the earth. In one sense it is a blessing that this happens, because then God must judge it and destroy it. But the church must before this be united to Jesus, in order to enter into this glory; and we are introduced to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Chapter 19:1-9

Glory belongs to God and to the Lamb. If the church is looking for its advantages on the earth, it falls into Babylon. Jesus wills that she should have the glory that belongs to Him, and that she should with Him wait until He enters into His glory to enjoy it with Him. If she is looking for an earthly glory, she becomes unfaithful to her heavenly Bridegroom; and this is the greatest unfaithfulness. We ought not to have any of the things which the price of this world gives, but receive the heavenly things from the hand of God, and expect them from Himself. The church ought to be on the earth the manifestation of that thorough detachment from the earth. She ought to be entirely independent of everything else, and in absolute dependence on God. This is the trial and proof of faith—to refuse the possession of things before God gives them. It was the sin of Saul to have sacrificed before Samuel had come. It is infinitely better to wait for the enjoyment of everything with Christ. “All things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. And if this

link is broken, the relationship between God and the creature is broken also. The church must wait for the epoch of her glory, until the judgment of God be executed. Satan always tries to deceive the church in this respect. He even endeavours to unite Christians in a spirit of human association to arrive at a spiritual millennium which is not promised, and which would exalt man and the means he has in his hand. Nothing will make the bride happy but the presence of the Bridegroom. On the other hand, God will not exercise His power in the government of the world without Christ. Those who endeavour to produce a spiritual millennium want to use the resources of men. And as they must have money, they rest on what man can give. It is a Babel, notwithstanding the excellence of the intentions; and Christians who expect the blessing before the judgment always rest on the energy of man.

Verses 3, 4. The church praises the Lord because of the judgment of Babylon. The Lamb is not yet manifested. God judges corruption. The Lamb judges the beast, because it rises up against the King of kings. Verses 5, 6. God begins to take possession of His kingdom. When God acts as king, He executes judgment. If He were now acting as a king, every soul here would be cut off; but now He is acting in patience and in grace during the priesthood of Jesus.

Verse 7 is the expression of our joy. It is impossible that Christ can take possession of His kingdom before the church has made herself ready, and is manifested in the glory, and, that having been through resurrection, introduced into the glory for the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus will have us united to Him in the glory. When Christ shall manifest His glory, He wills that the world

which has despised us should know that we are loved even as Christ Himself was loved. The marriage of the Lamb will be to us the manifestation of that love. Babylon being judged, the Lord celebrates the marriage-supper of the Lamb. We see the contrast between Babylon, the glory of the world, and the church of God, which has suffered with Christ, which has been persecuted in the world, but which is now glorified with Jesus. We see here the entirely heavenly character of the church.

The sufferings of the church are absolutely necessary to her. As soon as she ceases to suffer, she begins to lose her true character, and her testimony in the world ceases. Awakenings have always been accompanied with difficulties and persecutions, because Satan is not yet bound. A man who cannot use arms to defend himself must suffer. It is also very trying to live with persons around us without having one thought in common with them; and the more the natural affections are alive the more the heart will suffer. The Holy Spirit quickens sensibility; but He gives strength to bear the suffering. At the same time, sensibility being more tender, it is wounded on every side without meeting with any sympathy. God tries Christians thus in order to manifest Christ in them. He cannot alter this until He has executed the judgment. As long as the heart yields itself to the testimony God sends, it is yet the time during which God will leave His children in suffering. The power of the Holy Spirit is not of the world: it enters into the world; but it cannot accustom itself to the world, neither find there its contentment. If we consider the mission of the Holy Spirit, the position of the

Bridegroom in heaven, all concurs to decide us to suffer with Christ and for His name.

Is it anything extraordinary that the Holy Spirit should attach us to heaven, and detach us from the earth? Jesus had the taste of heaven in everything He did, and the world cannot bear this. Whatever binds the church to the world loosens her from Christ. Jesus cannot recognise anything in the world, for there is nothing in the world that has not, according to its power, contributed to reject Him. It is impossible for a wife to attach herself to two husbands. It is not only forbidden, but it is quite impossible. As a bride, the church belongs to Christ; and we are dead to everything except to Christ risen. Christ for the church can only be a heavenly Bridegroom. As a temporal and Jewish Saviour of Israel, Jesus forbids His disciples to go into the way of the Gentiles; He was a Jew and He could only acknowledge those that were Jews: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Matt. 15:24. The church, in order to have a Christ, must have a risen Christ. The world having rejected Christ, Christ owns no fellowship with the world. The cross has put an ever-lasting barrier between the world, as such, and Jesus. “The world seeth me no more” (John 14:19), except as a Judge. Jesus saves a soul in separating it from the world, and communicates to that soul a life capable of enjoying the world to come where Jesus is glorified and loved.

The testimony rendered to Jesus can only operate in taking a soul morally out of the world, and in causing it to enter into the church. Could one have a risen Bridegroom in heaven, and an earthly bride in the earth? This is not possible. Having the life of Christ in a body that is still of the world, the Christians suffers, and

sees himself fettered by this body of death. It is Christ alone, Christ risen, Christ glorified, who is the Bridegroom of the church; and a church of the world, a religion of the world, is impossible. To secure the church Christ must die; and the church cannot possess a living Christ, unless He be a risen Christ. We suffer here, because we have a risen soul in a body that is not risen, and this is in a world at enmity with God. To wish to prepare a church here on earth for the coming of Christ is to understand neither Christ nor the church. It is when the Lord God Almighty has taken to Him great power to reign, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His bride hath made herself ready, that the church knows joy. To say that Jehovah reigns now, is, in one sense, a sort of blasphemy. God does not exercise His power in direct government. Do you think that He permits sin to prosper, infidelity to lift up a high head, and that He allows that war should exercise its depredations under His own government? Does not all this prove that Satan is the prince of this world? The Lord only enters upon the exercise of His kingly power down here when the downfall of Babylon takes place.

To apply the Psalms to the present time, when they say, “The Lord reigneth,” is to produce confusion. These Psalms express righteous judgment, and the desire to wash one’s feet in the blood of the enemies. What connection is there in this with the spirit of the Christian? This relates to a dispensation of judgment and of righteousness, and not of grace. Grace is acting now to draw the heart, and to make it cleave to heavenly things. In the reign of Christ God will reign in righteousness; and the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms calls for justice in the time of His reign. The principles

of the relations of God with men are quite different. The reign of Christ will be for the earth a time of joy; but that joy will proceed from the presence of righteousness acting upon the earth; Psalms 96, 97, 98, 99. When Jehovah takes to Him His power and reigns, He will execute justice and judgment in the earth. Do you believe that if He were actually exercising judgment, things would go on in the earth as they do now? The Lord is acting in grace now, and when He executes justice, the wicked will be cut off, and the righteous will then be able to live in peace, for he will be sustained and filled with joy. When Christians have chosen to sing the Psalms as belonging to the church, the relationship of Jehovah with Israel and those of the Father with the church have been confounded, and the church is thrown into darkness and worldliness. When all this is confounded, Jehovah is not found just, and the Father does not sanctify His people. In the Revelation we do not find the relationship of the Father with the church. So long as the church is on earth, God has not assumed the power of His kingdom.

In verse 7 the primary object of the love of God is to unite the church to Christ. This must take place in order that Christ may appear in glory and judge the beast. The church is not yet the wife—she is only betrothed to Christ. The Holy Spirit can never produce the glory of the church, nor celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb, because He cannot be the Bridegroom of the church. And to wish for the joy of the millennium through the Holy Spirit only, is to wish for the joy of the bride without the Bridegroom, which is a folly. There must be the personal manifestation of Jesus. The church must be risen to be with her risen Spouse.

What is actually the effect of testimony in the world? It is to raise persecution according to the power of the Holy Spirit which is put forth. If one would have it otherwise, the Lord must reign and execute justice. To wish for a millennium by the Holy Spirit is also to wish for the most violent persecution. The more the Holy Spirit acts, the hotter the persecution is.

In paradise, when God builded the woman, He presented her to Adam: this is what will happen concerning the church; Eph. 5:27. The love of Jesus for the church is something much more intimate, much higher, than the love of God for the world. He has given His fife for her; He washes her by His word; He will present her to Himself glorious with the same glory that He is Himself in as risen and glorified. This will be the marriage-supper of the Lamb. The church is the bride united to Jesus in glory. She is justified, purified, and glorified. A bride in a vile body is not fit for a Bridegroom in a glorious body.

The Almighty taking to Him His power and reigning is still a thing to come. God only reigns now through His hidden providence. In His kingdom all shall be set in order; but He cannot make the earth and the creation happy, before that which is most precious to Christ be there for the enjoyment of it with Him. The first thing necessary to the full accomplishment of the counsels of the Father and of the love of Jesus is the resurrection of the church, and the marriage of the Lamb. Our portion is to be with Christ, and to have the enjoyment with Him of all that He inherits, and of all that He enjoys. The principle of faithfulness in the church is not to recognise nor to take anything before her heavenly Bridegroom comes. She is to live as a virgin, waiting for the return of

Him to whom she is betrothed, and to keep herself in His absence from all that is unworthy of Him.

Chapter 19:11-21

In the marriage of the Lamb we see what Christ is to the church; in the judgment of the beast, what Christ is as a Judge. The violence which rises against the power of the Lamb is the object of judgment. Before this there must be the glory of Jesus with the church, and the marriage of the Lamb.

“All was created by him and for him,” Col. 1:16. Everything was created for His glory; but men of the world do not think of this. Every knee shall bow before Him; He is the centre of all the thoughts and of the justice of God. Jesus made Himself of no reputation; Jesus shall be glorified. Man makes use of the humiliation of Jesus in order to despise Him; but God shall glorify Him even there where He made Himself of no reputation, and in that very form which He took, and He shall glorify Him through those for whom He did thus make Himself of no reputation.

To philosophy God is only a means man uses to extol himself; but God has been pleased to bring low the wisdom and the intelligence of man by saving, through the foolishness of preaching, all those who believe. There where the Son of man has been humbled He shall be glorified; and man must bow the knee before the Last Adam. God will have the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory; and He will be glorified in Jesus, in rendering men submissive to Jesus as Lord. Jesus must be recognised such as God has presented Him, according to the foolishness of preaching, or one must recognise Him, without hope of mercy, when His glory shall be

manifested. If one will not have a Saviour, one must have a Judge. There is no one that will not have to bow the knee to Jesus. If one does not do it now, it is ingratitude and baseness.

The second thought of God in His counsels is the church. As He associated Eve with Adam, so He has associated the church with Christ. We have spoken of the marriage of the Lamb, and of the church risen and glorified, united to Christ risen and glorified. It is a thing quite different from the good-will of God towards His creatures. It is an intimate relationship between the children and the Father, between the bride and the Bridegroom. The church is reckoned as being not of the world but of heaven. Her origin is from above. Besides this there are the relations of God with the world— the government of God. Man will not have Christ to govern the world; he wishes to govern it himself and exclude God out of it: “This is the heir [not the Bridegroom], come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance,” Matt. 21:38.

As long as it is the accepted time, the time of salvation, man gives himself up to iniquity without restraint. He will have his own way in spite of God, and be like God. In this sense every man has the spirit of Antichrist, whom the Holy Spirit characterises by these words, “And the king shall do according to his will,” Dan. 11:36. This cannot last. Man must at last be judged of Him whom he has rejected. Is heaven to govern the earth? Yes; but man says, It is I who shall govern the world, and not God.

On four different occasions God has spoken solemnly, or will, with man. God spoke with man for the first time in

the garden of Eden. All relation with God had already ceased then, for man never spoke with God that he was not already condemned before God had spoken to him. The second time was on Mount Sinai. Israel, in dismay, said, “Let not God speak with us” (Ex. 20:19), for the glory of God had inspired terror in the heart of man. The third time was in Jesus, God manifested in the flesh. Man would not have God in love: hence, it became necessary to be either a Christian or an anti-Christian. The fourth time is when Jesus will come again to execute the judgment on all those who will not bow to Him as Lord. Man will be found either for Him or against Him. All those who have not received the love of the truth will be condemned.

Christ and the church appear in glory, and only in judgment. Heaven opens for their glorious manifestation. Man being a sinner, heaven cannot open itself to him. When Jesus was on the earth, heaven opened itself; Jesus was recognised as Son of God, and the Holy Ghost came down upon Him. Through the Holy Spirit Stephen sees heaven open; Acts 7:35. But the case is reversed. He looks into heaven and finds his portion there with Jesus, being, as He was, rejected from the earth, but identified with the glory of God. This also is the position of the whole church. At the end heaven will be opened to manifest the Son of man; and when it opens thus, it is that the Lord Jesus should come Himself and execute judgment on earth. Only when the evil forces God to notice it, does God smite it: until iniquity has come to the full (Gen. 15:16), God has long patience.

The last beast, the Roman empire revived, comes up out of the bottomless pit and goes to perdition. This is what we have brought before us. Men’s passions will be

inspired and excited by Satan, “whose coming,” we read, “is after the working of Satan,” 2 Thess. 2:9. Judas is an example of this. We do not only see in him covetousness, and the temptation of Satan presented to covetousness; but Satan taking possession of the heart, and hardening all the natural affections of a disciple towards Jesus. At that time also Satan shall harden the hearts of those of whom he shall have taken possession, even against the manifestation of all the glory of Jesus. Some natural feelings are found remaining, until Satan has taken possession of the heart; but after this man is capable of doing anything. Thus the chief priests would have killed Lazarus (John 12:10), because Jesus had raised him to life again, and because of this many of the Jews believed in Jesus, and left them; and they determined to put Jesus to death, because He had raised Lazarus from the dead; John 11:47-57.

The man of the earth lifts his head even up to heaven. Like Adam, he wishes to be as God Himself: he wishes to be so under the character of Christ, and he is Antichrist. He wants to possess the earth and make war with heaven; Isaiah 14:13, 14. Endowed with all the power of Satan, all man’s faculties in exercise, inspired by Satan’s energy, he assumes authority over all, and would seat himself at Jerusalem as king of all the earth, and extol himself like unto the Most High. It is then that the Son of man, who has humbled Himself, and whom God has exalted, shall come down from heaven, and the man of the earth who has exalted himself shall be abased. The question is now, and this is all the question, Whether the man of the earth is to prevail over the Man of heaven. The last beast, having seized upon the earth, and being followed by the kings of the earth, makes war with

Christ. We must know whether God will be the stronger, not only in the conscience, but in the world and in glory. Jerusalem is already becoming the centre of man's thoughts in the earth, because it is there the nations are to be gathered for judgment; Zech. 12:1-3. The nations appear to be beginning to burden themselves with Jerusalem. They do so without acknowledging the rights of Christ, who is alone the true King of Jerusalem; but God shall make good the claims of Christ. The nations are labouring in the fire for very vanity (Isaiah 50:11), in order that He that has been despised may be glorified.

Verses 12, 13. Jesus appears. He has His essential glory, a name known to Him alone. All He does is the manifestation of what God has revealed. He will be the Word of God in judgment, and the executor of the revelation of God against sin. Now, the word is judging morally; then, it will be in reality. The white horse is a sign of victory. The sharp sword is already seen; Rev. 1:16.

Verse 15 is in allusion to Psalm 2:8, 9: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This is what Jesus shall execute at His glorious appearing. To break the nations with a rod of iron is quite another thing from the gospel. He has the nations, not as His bride, but as His inheritance. The little stone (Dan. 2:34, 35) becomes a great mountain, filling the whole earth. The church (Rev. 2:26, 27) is made a partaker with Him in His power over the nations. Jesus has received power of His Father, not merely to secure the church, but also to break the nations, and the church shall be with Jesus. Jesus has

not yet asked for the inheritance; but is praying that His own may be kept. He is the sovereign High Priest, not of the world, but of the church. We have a High Priest; Heb. 4:14, 15; chap. 8:1. The rebellious Jews shall be judged. The judgment of the world is by Jesus—such is the use of the rod of iron which He wields.

It is important to see the distinction between the inheritance of the nation, and the position of the church. In Isaiah 63:1-6 Christ is revealed to us treading alone the winepress of His wrath. The blood (Rev. 14:18-20) came out even unto the horse-bridles. It is thus that this awful judgment of God is depicted unto us.

Verse 16 informs us that Jesus does not take His title of King of kings before the kingdom of the world, on the sound of the seventh trumpet being heard, becomes the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ. When political attention is attracted to Jerusalem, when things are preparing rapidly for the judgment of Christ in the earth, when this judgment is going to be executed, it is just then that the nations reject Christ and harden themselves against Him. Jesus shall appear as the Faithful, the True, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, being already the Bridegroom of the church glorified.

It is after this that the judgment of the beast will take place. This beast34 is the wicked one announced to the Thessalonians, the Antichrist of Daniel. The false prophet is here found identified with the second beast. The distinction between the church glorified and the world judged is very evident in the chapter before us. Antichrist extols himself, and Christ comes only to judge him. The things which God will separate in judgment are already separated in His mind, and they are as much so

now as when they will be seen, the one in the lake of fire, and the other in heaven. The judgment shall merely manifest this to the world. There are three characters of the beast and of Satan's power.

Firstly, the Roman empire in its eighth head, the chief of the last form of the beast at the time of the Gentiles. Secondly. This chief does his own will, and will establish his throne at Jerusalem. Thirdly. He is the wicked one; iniquity has reached to the full. The false prophet is the second beast in chapter 13, which had horns like the lamb and spoke like the dragon. Babylon has disappeared from the scene.

Verse 17. The supper of the great God is a very strong figure of the destruction of kings, captains, powers, of horses and their riders, of freemen, slaves, of small and great, and of all those, in short, whose bodies are given to the birds of prey. The angel, standing in the sun, acts in the power and supreme authority of God, in judgment against him who stands in opposition to God. Daniel 7:7, 8 shews to us the fourth beast, the fourth monarchy, as a blasphemous power, which God judges and totally destroys. The description of this destruction is given to us in the Revelation.

Daniel 7:17, 18. The saints of the Most High not only take the place of authority, instead of the beast which uttered great things against God, but also that of the four beasts. In verse 21 the horn which uttered great things makes war with the saints. But, if God permits the beast to overcome the saints, it is until Christ, the Ancient of days, comes, until judgment be given to the saints of the Most High, and until they obtain the kingdom. What puts an end to the authority of the beast

is the coming of the Ancient of days, and not the preaching of the gospel. This is the character of the beast and its end.

In the Revelation and in Daniel there are ten kingdoms. 35 The beast has a mortal wound, but comes out of the bottomless pit. The ten kings give their power to it, and the dragon his throne; but it goes into perdition. The kings associate themselves with it, and this satanical power, which at all times has overcome the saints, and which has been set up again, goes to perdition. It is the apostasy and antagonism of power against God. The eighth head is the beast. All its power is concentrated in the head, in the chief of the Roman empire. This is not yet manifested. Antichrist, who is the chief of the iniquity of the human heart, fills up the measure of the rebellion of the Gentiles, to whom God had entrusted power when He removed His throne from Jerusalem, at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Instead of glorifying God in His kingdom, man rejects Jesus, and in the end is found making war against Jesus, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. In verse 3 Antichrist is the son of perdition. He goes to perdition. Antichrist, the wicked one, has brought the iniquity of man to its height. To have sinned against God, violated the law, and rejected Jesus, although nothing morally was wanting to the sin of man—all this was not yet the height of iniquity. The mystery of iniquity is that evil which acts in a hidden manner in the bosom of the church, as a germ destined to grow until the revolt—a revolt which will pursue its course till it rises up openly against Christ manifested in glory. While men were slumbering, the enemy has sown the tares. The mystery of iniquity, which had already begun at the time of the apostle, ends in the revolt of Christianity, the professing

church. God does not judge what is only yet in a state of mystery. The mystery is that which is known only by its revelation, and without this it remains hidden to all human intelligence. It is the same also with the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, and with the mystery of the union of Christ and the church. What a mystery of iniquity it is, that the church should have been made the nest where Satan has begun and brought forth the fulness of the iniquity of man! Jude wished to write of the salvation common to them, but he could not. The evil had begun, and he urges them to contend earnestly for what they had. The evil had begun. He warns them, “for certain men have crept in among you unawares, who have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness,” and who end in denying the Lord Jesus. Those were the same of whom Enoch had prophesied. It is to deny the Saviour recognised according to the testimony given by the Holy Ghost, and to revolt against Him:36 this will be the fulness of iniquity; after that comes the judgment.

To the Thessalonians Paul explains the progress of the mystery of iniquity, until that which is now an obstacle to it be taken away. When this is taken out of the way, then shall the wicked by revealed. He is the representative of the iniquity, and he will be manifested when that which restrains iniquity shall be taken away. His character is to be without law, to do his own will, man’s will. The word rendered by “the wicked one” signifies “he that is without law.” Christ, the Man of God, says, “Lo, I come, O God, to do thy will,” Psalm 40:7, 8; Heb. 10. He has been a servant in everything. He gives the kingdom to those for whom the Father has prepared it. His only will was to do the will of God. “Not

my will, but thy will." "By the obedience of one many are made righteous," Rom. 5:19. He has not in anything done His own will.

What characterises this age, and what this age is boasting of, is the right of doing its own will. It is also what characterised the sin of Adam, before evil concupiscences came into the world. The character of Christ, the elect King of God, is obedience. "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do," John 14:31. Jesus was obedient unto death. The power of God was thus acting in Him, to render Him, notwithstanding the difficulties, so obedient as to make Himself of no reputation in the sight of God, and to do all things for God. The character of the wicked is to be without law, to do his own will. Then comes the contest between the Man of God and the man of the earth, to know who is to succeed. The principle of evil is to have a will. For a long time God restrains and confines the evil. When He takes away that which now letteth, then shall the wicked, who does his own will, manifest and exalt himself even against the manifestation of the glory, as he did exalt himself in the mystery of iniquity; so now against the manifestation of grace, as well as when Jesus was here below. There is no independence for man; he must be either subject to God, or subject to Satan. He alone is independent who can secure himself from death. God permits Satan to act with efficacy. They would do their own will. They will work signs, wonders, and miracles of falsehood. The wicked one will be the expression of the iniquity of man without restraint, who will have no law. He will put himself under the influence and bondage of. Satan, who will give him all his power. It is in its full

power the principle of the first Adam, but with a decided will, knowing it and wishing it, and acting after the thoughts and according to the power which Satan inspires him with. The question is, Who is to succeed, the Man of God, or the man of the earth who will do his own will?

Daniel 11:36, 45, shews to us that Antichrist, the king, shall do according to his will. As king, he will reign over the Jews at Jerusalem. He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god; he shall speak marvellous things, and shall prosper till the indignation against the Jews be accomplished. He will be king at Jerusalem, the chief or the head37 of the beast; in him iniquity has come to its full. Afterwards, he is destroyed. This is the end of the times of the Gentiles. The beast and the false prophet are, before all the others, thrown into the lake of fire and of brimstone. It is, at least as to them, the judgment of the living. The beast, as Antichrist,38 denies the Father and the Son; 1 John 2:22. He denies Jesus Christ come in the flesh, and he denies that Jesus is the Messiah. It will be through this last means that he will attach to himself the infidel Jews. He denies Christ come in the flesh, and he gives himself for the Christ [i.e., presents himself as Messiah].

The false prophet (v. 20) is the second beast of chapter 13:12. He has the form of the power of Christ, and the voice of Satan. He performs prodigies. (Compare chap. 19:20 with chap. 13:12-14.) These passages shew the identity of the second beast with the false prophet.

This character of the beast is that of an empire. In losing its character of beast, it ceases to be a secular power, and becomes a power only through its doctrine. It

exercises the power of the beast, and causes it to be adored. It is judged as a false prophet. We see in this false Christianity,39 which, after having lost its worldly and terrestrial dominion, has retained the power of its doctrinal influence. The temporal power of popery (or rather of hierarchy, including the pope) is, to a certain extent, destroyed; but it subsists as false prophet, and it always is more evidently this and with more influence.

Chapter 20:1-6

We have seen the judgment of Babylon by God, and that of the beast and of the false prophet by Jesus. We find now the judgment falling on Satan,40 the spring, the power, and the strength of all this iniquity. The heart of man was the soil in which all this was sown. Satan, nevertheless, was the author of it.

Verses 1-3. The fact that Satan shall be bound is of the greatest importance to the world. One can hardly form an idea of the difference it will produce as to the world; we have very little idea of the corruption, the subtlety, and wickedness of the heart of man, and of the power of Satan. One of the principal characters of the dispensation to come is that Satan is bound. That is quite a new thing for the world. As wicked and the seducer, Satan is the serpent; as having power, he is the dragon; as adversary, he has the name of Satan; as accuser, that of the devil. Satan, in causing Adam to fall in sin, had taken away all the creation from him, and thereby from God. Adam, as the image of Him that was to come, had the possession of all the earth. Satan seduced him. Adam and Eve fell, and with them the creation. This link being broken, the whole falls: all is ruined in its head, and separated from God; and Satan

figures as prince of the world. God intervenes in many ways; among others, by the deluge; the world, notwithstanding, plunges into idolatry, and by this falls more than ever under Satan's power.

In the word, no mention is made of idolatry before the deluge. Man, as man, has adored Satan, and in many places is still adoring him. The philosophers of antiquity adored him themselves, no less than the pagans of our days. God has proved in His wisdom that man by wisdom did not know God; and this is where man's wisdom has led him. In order to destroy idolatry God separated to Himself a nation, manifested His glory to it, spoke to it, and made Himself known to it. Nevertheless, before Moses had come down again from the mount, Israel had already made the golden calf, and had thus put themselves under Satan's power, in spite of the barrier that God had raised around His people.41 God sent afterwards His own Son, the Last Adam, although not yet manifested as such. Christ is, in fact, the Last Adam, and the Father of the spiritual race, only after His resurrection; as Adam, on the other hand, became the father of the fallen race after his fall. Satan addresses himself also to Jesus, led into the desert by the Spirit, to tempt Him as he tempted Adam, but in vain. Jesus, having bound the strong man, casts out the demons, shewing thereby what power Satan was exercising in those that were possessed. In order to shew that it is not the iniquity of man that is called the demons, the legion enter the swine, and act in those animals. The demons ask that they may not be sent into the bottomless pit,42 the time for them to be sent there not having come yet. Seeing that he could do nothing more to seduce Him or to destroy the effect of His power, Satan raises the

whole world against Him. And as Jesus had made Himself surety for our sin, Satan, who has the power of death, uses this right of death against Jesus43 made sin for us. All that man was had been ruined and was under the power of death. It is in the resurrection of Jesus that the victory is found again, and the proof of the judgment of the prince of this world.

In the meanwhile, the time for the execution of the judgment had not yet come, and Satan is still dwelling in the heavenly places (not in the heaven, which God inhabits in light inaccessible, but in the created heavens). The death of Jesus has not expelled him thence. Nevertheless, when, in the name of Jesus, the disciples cast the demons out of creation, Jesus says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” He foresees the downfall of Satan by the power of the name of Jesus. Actually, Satan acts still in the creation, as we see in the case of Job. Jesus is now absent—in heaven. Not being bound, Satan tries and tempts man, and man falls. He is busy about the church; he sows tares there, and spoils the work of God upon earth. He cannot spoil it in heaven.

We see, in this recapitulation of what Satan accomplishes upon the earth, how he spoils everything until he is bound. God, it is true, watches over the faithful; nevertheless, Satan is in the world, and spoils there the work of God; and if our salvation were resting on man’s own responsibility, there would be no salvation for us. Men of the world can form no idea of the manner Satan is blinding the heart. Before God gives them up to it as a chastisement, Satan is already using his power in blinding men, and in making them fall into error. From the beginning to the period to which this chapter of

Revelation brings us, all that God has done upon the earth, in the world, and in the church, has been spoiled through Satan. Satan has influence in the world; he blinds the heathen and the christianised world. Alas! he also blinds God's children as to their inheritance and as to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Satan endeavours to rob the church of this truth, and to make her say "My Lord delayeth his coming." He will not have it that one should believe his dominion is going to be overthrown; but at the same time, truth is professed and maintained even by unconverted persons, and subsists as given of God amongst men. But now in the time of judgment this will be no more so; God gives men up to an efficacious error that they may believe a lie.

We have seen in chapter 12 Satan cast out from heaven. He will never enter there again. He falls upon the earth, and causes Antichrist to revolt against Christ. Then Christ comes down from heaven, destroys the beast and the false prophet, and binds Satan himself. All that Satan did to the first Adam disappears. Creation ceases to be under his dominion, and man, delivered from Satan's power, passes under that of Jesus. Evil may remain in man's heart, but Satan is banished from the scene of this world. The Judge, the Last Adam, comes down from heaven in the power of the victory He has already gained in the resurrection. This is not yet the state of eternity. These are things manifested on the earth, where Jesus shall reign after having bound Satan and delivered the creation from the bondage of corruption.

Why not bind Satan immediately? Because the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God; Rom. 8:19. Christ cannot manifest

Himself in the glory and in the judgment, nor deliver the world without having delivered and raised the church, nor before the judgment be given to the church as well as to Christ. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2; Dan. 7:22). “Until the Ancient of days comes, and judgment be given to the saints of the Most High.” Therefore it is that creation is not yet delivered from the yoke of corruption. The church risen must judge the world with Christ. The world to come is also to be subjected to the same trial. This does not take place during the continuance of the thousand years of Christ’s reign—only at the end of that reign, when Satan comes up out of the bottomless pit. Then, as always, man fails immediately.

While Satan is bound there is no seduction, and, consequently, no combat, no suffering, no victory. God permits these things to take place now, that we may have the glory. The most ordinary precepts of the gospel suppose the superiority of the enemy as to this world, and command not to resist evil; they suppose, therefore, a state of suffering. If the world were really Christian, these precepts would not be applicable, because there would be nothing to suffer.

Verses 4-6. There are thrones. Daniel says (chapter 7:9), “I beheld till the thrones were cast down” (or rather placed). Daniel only sees the thrones; here we see there are those seated on the thrones. Now, there is suffering; then, we shall reign with Christ, and we shall be on Jesus’ throne; Rev. 3:21. “The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them,” John 17:22. The world will see this glory, and will know that we have been loved as Christ has been loved. When Christ shall sit upon the throne of His glory, we shall be seated on thrones. This

mediatorial kingdom, in which Christ is seated on His throne, will at the end be given up to God the Father; 1 Cor. 15:24. The beheaded are those who have suffered for their testimony during the course of the events which we have seen in the Revelation. Besides those who are seated upon thrones, and those who were beheaded, we perceive here a third class, that of those who have not received the mark of the beast—negative faithfulness, it is true, but which is not forgotten. These three classes (those that are seated on thrones, those that were beheaded, and those who have not received the mark of the beast) have equally part in the first resurrection, which takes place a thousand years before the resurrection of the dead who are dead in their sins.

There have been those who have wished to make of the first resurrection a resurrection of principles; but the triumph of principles, mine or those of others, cannot be a personal reward for having been beheaded for those principles. To use a figure of language, one might strictly say that principles are reigning; but how could one say that they shall be priests? Those that rise reign a thousand years with Christ and shall be made kings and priests; and this cannot be applied in any way to principles, but only to the persons of the risen saints.

We see then here Satan bound, Jesus reigning over the earth, and the faithful reigning with Jesus Himself. It is necessary to understand well that Satan spoils all the work of God in the earth. The death of Jesus banishes Satan from the conscience indeed, but does not banish him from heaven. The power of Christ destroys the power of Satan; but this power will never be so much manifested as in the person of Antichrist. We have to contend until Satan be cast out from heaven.

Chapter 20:5, 6

From verses 4-10 we have the whole of the thousand years. It is the reign of Christ with His saints, who govern, and Satan is bound. The whole state of the world depends on these two things, the reign of Christ, and the prison of Satan.

Now, on the contrary, Christ is hidden, and Satan is acting unbound. The reign spoken of here is so distinct and so positive, that those who are in heaven say “And we shall reign on the earth,”44 Rev. 5:10. Their power is from heaven; they shall reign over the earth according to that power. The glory of Jesus is the object of the counsels of God. Everything in the word and in the ways of God is directed towards that end; without this we cannot get the intelligence of the word. Christ is the great object of God. God would have that His whole being should be evidently manifested, and this manifestation is seen in Jesus.45 No one has seen God; the Son has revealed Him to us. God manifested in the flesh has made Himself known to us. God is only “seen of angels” through the manifestation of God in the Person of Christ. The knowledge of God in Jesus gives intelligence to the most simple Christian. God did manifest Himself to man as He is, and placed Himself at his level. The simple can apprehend and understand God. He hides these things from the wise and prudent. Jesus is the object and the thought of all the counsels of God.

This glory, which God has given to Christ, God has manifested in Jesus as man. Already, in the creation, the divine glory of the Son has been manifested, and His right of possessing all things established. Jesus created

everything. He has title over creation, which can only be blessed under Him, and during His reign. God has willed that everything should be made subject to man. Adam was the head of the creation; he failed, and all failed in him and with him. Satan having gained the victory over Adam, all has fallen under the dominion of Satan, who fills the world with evil, and rules over it through the passions of men.

The question is not merely about salvation in God's counsels, but of the restoration of all things. God re-establishes everything, and man too, in introducing into the world Jesus, the Last Adam. The sons of men are not forsaken in this. God unites the church with the Last Adam. All the creation fell in the person of the first Adam, and it is the Last who becomes the object of the counsels of God. God does not restore the first Adam; He introduces a second, the spring of life to all those who are redeemed. The word was made flesh. God became a man, in order that all things might be made subject to man, and this man is Jesus;46 Heb. 2; Psalm 8; 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1. The Man Jesus is set over everything.

The first Adam and the Last Adam cannot subsist together. It is impossible that Christ and Satan can be both at the same time the princes of this world. Christ is not yet seated on His throne; He is on His Father's throne; Rev. 3:21. Now, it is the presence of the Spirit of Christ within, that renders the heart faithful. In order that Christ may reign as the Last Adam, Satan must be bound.

The question is not to know whether Christ's reign is a spiritual or a personal reign; for the Holy Ghost does not leave us, and therefore the reign is spiritual as well as

personal. But to say that Christ will not be there is to deny the reign of Christ. The Holy Ghost has not been made man, and He is not the Bridegroom of the church, and the church desires the Bridegroom. The Spirit and the bride say “Come.” The Spirit does not say this to Himself; He says it to Christ. A reign of Christ without Christ is a reign without a king. It is limiting the church to the desire of what she has already, that is, the Holy Ghost. It is to confound everything in the relations of Christ as King of the earth and as Bridegroom of the church.

Acts 3:19-21. That of which the prophets spoke is the glory at the end, the restoration of all things. The heaven must receive Jesus (not the Holy Ghost, who had already come down), until the times of the restitution of all things, and until the times of refreshing. It is Christ who, as Man, is to reign. God has willed to subject all things to man (not to Christ, who does not come, but) to Christ, who shall be sent from heaven, and who is now preached. It must be the man Jesus manifested in glory. Jesus is moreover invested with the judgment. He judges, because He is the Son of man; John 5:27. The Holy Ghost is not the Son of man. Besides, the judgment precedes the millennium, and cannot be conceived before a millennium brought by the Holy Ghost, and by the preaching of the gospel.

The promises made to the Last Adam, the hopes of the Bridegroom, the judgment, all is personal to the Son of man. Jesus is coming in Person. All this is connected with the glory of Christ. One cannot be in the truth if one rambles from the Person of the Son of man. The Holy Ghost acts but to magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus.

The reign of a thousand years is a reward. Men may say sometimes, that they are principles which shall reign, that it is a question about a resurrection of principles. But it is written “they shall reign” (Rev. 5:10; 20:6); and I cannot thus confound principles and persons. If we suffer, we shall reign. We are not principles. When we suffer, is it in order that the principles may reign? It would be a singular reward for me when I suffer to say that it is in order that my principles may reign a thousand years.

The apostle speaks of the first resurrection, as if all knew that there are two resurrections. In the word of God, two resurrections are always spoken of, and never one general resurrection, of which one finds neither the expression nor the idea. God does not thus confound the just and the unjust: and nothing will separate them more than the resurrection. Now, they are mixed and confounded in the world; but the resurrection shall separate them. There is a resurrection from amongst the dead; therefore, there are some dead that do not rise in that resurrection, whereas others do rise.

How can principles be priests? It is nonsense. Those who will reign will be priests. He has loved us, and has washed us, and made us kings and priests. One can neither wash principles nor make them priests. If the Person of the Lord Jesus and the persons of the saints be taken away from the glory, the root of every affection is cut off, and one has a millennium without Christ and without affection.

The first and the second resurrection manifest the glory of Christ in two very different ways. The church glorifies the Lord in being with Him and serving Him. Jesus shall

be glorified in the judgment of the wicked, who shall acknowledge, in spite of themselves, that He is Lord. And for this reason, the resurrection of the just completes their life and their glory. The power of the life of Christ is applied to their bodies, whereas the resurrection of the wicked is a resurrection of judgment, and not of life. The resurrection of life does not in any wise belong to the wicked. He “shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you,” Rom. 8:11. The life of Christ and the Spirit of Christ are not in the wicked; therefore, the cause of the resurrection of the just is not in the wicked. By the resurrection the just are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ; John 5:25. In Luke 14:14 the Lord Jesus says “These shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” If all rise together, one could not hold such language, nor that of Jesus in Luke 20:35, where He speaks of those who shall be counted worthy to obtain “that age, and the resurrection of the dead “; for if all rise together, some cannot be distinctively counted worthy of the resurrection. Thus far as to the resurrection of the just: the resurrection of the wicked is for the judgment. It is not contemporary with that of the just. In order that the just may reign, they must be risen. They shall bear the image of the heavenly. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,” 1 John 3:2.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:23, “But every one in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterwards, they that are Christ’s at his coming.” The thought of a general resurrection is traditional, and comes from having lost sight of the perfect salvation of the church. Those who have believed are already justified, and have part in the resurrection of the just, which accomplishes their glory

and their happiness. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and those that are alive shall be changed; 1 Thess. 4:13-17. There is an infinite happiness in the thought that we shall be conformed to the image of Jesus, and that we shall have the same portion with Him. If we were not kept of God, even the sight of the glory of Christ could not prevent us from falling into the hands of Satan. May this encourage us and keep us humble!

Chapter 20:7-15

Verses 7, 8 contain a very important and humiliating principle. It is impossible, in whatever position man may be, that he should not fall if he is left to himself, and if he has not communicated to him from God a life of which the grace of God is the strength. Jesus manifested in glory does not change the heart. This change is a work of grace. As soon as those even who have seen the glory are no more kept from temptation by the power of God Himself, where they are subjected to temptation, they fall and Satan makes them at once his slaves. Satan, being loosed, comes up out of the bottomless pit, upon the earth, not into heaven, where he re-enters no more. When at last banished from the earth, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are since the beginning of the millennium, and shall never come out of it. This is a proof that the judgment of the wicked [dead] does not take place at the coming of Christ. When the great white throne is there, the earth flees away; and this is not the return of Jesus.

In the present dispensation, God visits the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name; Acts 15:14. Satan is opposed to this people in whom the Holy Ghost

dwells, and who have the foretaste of the glory and the joy that belong to the people of God. The consequence is, that they are a separate people, who fail in rendering testimony if they enter, however little, into the ways of the world. Already, in Abraham, God takes out of the world a people to Himself, whom He leaves in the world. Israel was, as a nation, separated from the world. An Israelite could not espouse a Gentile. This separation was according to the flesh, not the result of faith.

In the church, it is individual faith which causes this separation. All the precepts of the gospel suppose a state of persecution; Matt. 5:38-48; 20:16. Everything supposes opposition; Luke 14:25-32. If there were a Christian world, the precepts of the gospel would not have any application.

During the thousand years, on the contrary, Jesus shall be the Prince of this world, of which Satan is now the prince. Now, all those who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; 2 Tim. 3:12. We are called to suffer; and if the world were really christianised, we should be called to run with the tide instead of contending against it.

When Satan shall be bound, all that will be changed, and this opposition of the world will cease. The Lord Jesus shall reign in righteousness; there will be no temptation, and the mass of people will be really governed by Him. If this took place in the present dispensation, all the precepts of the gospel would become useless and out of place. Under the reign of Christ, the church, which has already suffered, will be seen glorified, and the world blessed, without Satan’s temptations, living in peace and

under the government of the Son of man. It does not follow that every soul on earth shall be converted.

If the reign of a thousand years were a spiritual millennium, it would not be possible that Satan could be loosed to seduce all those who would have the life of Christ in them. Instead of that, it is a government without temptations; and when Satan is loosed, he carries man away with him in spite of the sight of the glory of Jesus; and this is the final trial which displays how impossible it is for God to trust in the creature; John 2:24. We are called to trust the faithfulness of God, because we have learned that God cannot trust us.

It would be extraordinary in a dispensation for man not to be subject to trial and temptation in the ways of God. Those of the millennium are to be tempted like others. The consequence of it is the same—man falls. Even the presence of Christ does not prevent it; and the heart is so irremediably wicked and evil, that in the presence of Jesus it will yield to its passions and lusts, and please himself instead of pleasing Jesus. Innocent man fell—still more does he when he is no more innocent.

During the manifestation of the glory of Christ, the revolt cannot be hidden. Man may see the glory of Christ, be convinced of it, and oppose himself to it! Lazarus being risen, the Jews wish to put him to death with Jesus, because of the testimony rendered to the power of Christ. If the heart of man is not converted, renewed, and kept of God, it is capable of anything. Verses 9, 10. They will make war with the saints and with the city beloved of God.

At that time the whole world shall be the sphere of the judgments of the prophecy. With the Jews the promises

and the ways of God are circumscribed in the land of Canaan, which is simply also called the earth. Later this sphere extends itself, and the four monarchies, then Christendom, become the prophetic earth. Jesus shall reign over the whole inhabited earth, and prophecy shall then extend over all its surface. If, when Christ is manifested in glory, the world oppose the people of God, it is not surprising that the same thing should happen now that Christ is hidden. To think otherwise is to be in illusion.

To understand the glory of Christ in the church, the church must be separate from the world. When the church is mixed up with the world, this only spoils the church and Christians. The world never draws towards Christians, and it cannot do so, for its own nature cannot allow it; but Christians may to their own loss draw near the world, because the old man is still in them.

Verse 10. The beast and the false prophet are in the lake burning with fire and brimstone since the judgment of the earth. Satan is not there. He reigns in a public-house, in balls, in the opera, in the theatre, in concerts, etc., and he rules in the hearts of men by presenting to them things pleasant to their lusts. When Satan shall be in the lake burning with fire, he will not reign there; he will be there as the most miserable being. At the beginning of the millennium the beast and the false prophet will be thrown there alive. Satan is only bound in the bottomless pit, from whence he shall come out again to tempt men.

As long as Satan is in heaven, he is the prince of this world. There are idolaters, a Babylon, and that secret influence which deceives the heart of man, so as to

make him look at a piece of wood as a god. These are the effects of the deceits of the enemy. What has become of the greatest part of the human race? They are plunged in idolatry. Civilisation does not draw man out of it; the people of antiquity, whose civilisation has been transmitted to us, did not through it come out of idolatry; and the most enlightened men submit themselves to things which their own reason rejects, because they are under the influence of Satan. When Satan has come out of the bottomless pit, he can no more exercise this influence, because he cannot go up into heaven again and give himself out for a god before men. He can only excite them to open revolt.

Verses 11-15. Satan being set aside, here is the judgment of the dead. The judgment of the great white throne only applies to the dead. Then it is that the resurrection of judgment takes place; the resurrection of life is for those only who shall reign. The effect of judgment is that “in thy sight shall no man living be justified,” Psalm 143:2. It is only those who have the life of Christ in themselves that will escape from the lake burning with fire and brimstone. To be judged according to our own works is to be condemned.

One thing that will prove that the question here is not concerning the coming of Christ is, that the place of the great white throne is not mentioned; whereas Acts 1:11 announces the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth, and Zechariah 14:4 shews Him to us on the Mount of Olives. It is from that mountain that He was taken up from the midst of His disciples, and it is on that mountain that He will again set His feet. It is not at all the great white throne. When this appears, heaven and earth flee away from before His face. This is not the coming again on the

earth. The dead appear before Him. For the judgment of the living He must come again where the living are to be found. In the other case, it is all over with the heaven and present earth.

Chapter 21:1-8

An event of all gravity is here mentioned: Jesus gives up the kingdom to the Father; 1 Cor. 15:24. He has taken the kingdom as a man. He who became a man and made Himself of no reputation has been highly exalted. The question is about His humanity, not about His divinity, properly speaking.

Jesus, as a man, intercedes now for us; as a man He shall reign also. This is infinitely precious to us. Jesus is not an unknown God, but a man sitting at the right hand of God. As a man He shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, which as a man He received; 1 Cor. 15:22-28. As a man the Son shall be subject to God and shall no more reign, although as God He shall reign eternally. There is no more intercession when all the saints are happy, nor any government when all the wicked have disappeared and God shall be all in all.

Justice shall not reign then; it shall dwell; 2 Pet. 3. Perfection will not exist until God has made all things new. There is here no distinction made of a people of God amongst men. “The tabernacle of God is with men.” All is peace. God is all in all. All those who remain after the judgment are blessed together. But we have to consider whether what is called the church now shall not also be a special blessing, whether it will not be the tabernacle of God amongst men. (See Eph. 3:21.)

Jesus is here the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of the counsels of God. He is God Himself. When all shall be accomplished and made subject to God, then there shall be an eternal blessing. Since the fall of Adam until this day it is the manifestation of the grace and of the patience of God.

We have in one sense come to the end of the book of the Revelation. Here it is that events of the prophecy are closed. What follows is a description of the holy Jerusalem, of the joy of the saints during the thousand years, and of the relations of the heavenly Jerusalem with the earth. Everything is centred in Christ. The smallest, the meanest, of those who attach themselves to Christ, who love Christ, shall shine in the glory of Christ, and that one shall be found wise even by the wicked who despise him now. May God render us faithful to the glory of Christ, while the world is despising this glory, and we shall be made partakers of it when it shall be manifested!

Chapters 21:9-27; 22:1-5

In comparing verse 9 with chapter 17:1, you will find this likeness, that it is one of the seven angels who have the seven vials that gives the description of Babylon, and that it is one of them also who describes the bride of the Lamb, the holy city, with the whole of the prophecy from verse 9. The historical unfolding of the mediatorial service of the Lamb is already contained in this book.

What is found in chapters 21:9-27 and 22:1-5 does not form a continuation, either historical or prophetic, of what precedes. It is a description of the holy Jerusalem, and there are many circumstances which precede what is in the beginning of the chapter. The angel, in the same

manner, describes Babylon after having given her history.

Verses 9-13. It is in heaven, in the glory only, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is spoken of in the accomplishment of God's ways concerning her.47 The present dispensation is only the assembling the living stones of this city, the assembling of the saints, the church. Through the resurrection, we shall all be placed without sound (see i Kings 6:7) in the glory prepared for us. This is the bride of the Lamb, not of the King, as in the Old Testament. The church has part in the sufferings, as well as in the glory of Christ; and to her Jesus is the Lamb, and not the King; the manifestation of the heavenly, and not of the earthly, righteousness of God (for in the last case Christ ought not to have died). This heavenly righteousness is hidden in God, unknown to the world, but known of faith. Before the world, the death of Christ is the greatest injustice of man. The Lamb is also the manifestation of the patience and of the goodness of God. But, as to the accomplishment of righteousness with regard to His death, no true estimate could be made of its value, except in heaven. No reward on earth could have been worthy of what Jesus has suffered. The manner in which Jesus glorified the Father could not be worthily recompensed but in placing the Son at the right hand of the Father. To suffer for having done well, and to submit to all—this is the part of a Christian. It is better to keep Christ's character than one's cloak. The church has part in all this. She has the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ and of His resurrection. She becomes the Lamb's wife in His glory, as in His rejection: she has part in His sufferings. We cannot have a portion with Christ above without having

it with Him here on earth. Christ is one whole. The spouse of the King is the spouse on earth. The bride of the Lamb is the church in glory. She has the enjoyment of the ripe fruits of the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Even in the glory grace is the portion of the church. Government in justice characterises Jerusalem on earth. The city comes down from heaven. The city which comes from the earth is Babylon. Here it is the holy Jerusalem. She comes from heaven. She is not found on the earth; there is no thought even of her there. It may be manifested to the earth; but in its origin it is a heavenly thing, also in its character, in its nature altogether.

What comes from God is holy. Jesus, the only man who really came forth from God, was perfectly holy. He was not of the earth. It is impossible that anything could stain the origin of the nature of what comes from heaven. “He cannot sin, because he is born of God,” 1 John 3:9. Our risen body is a house of heaven: it is a glory reserved in heaven. What is truly of God abides in God and cannot fade. In its nature life, essentially divine, is not only pure, but it cannot fade nor become corrupt.

There is still something more— “the glory of God.” Then the city has the form and the beauty of what God manifests in the glory. God is glorified there: all shines with His glory; all relates to it, bears witness to it, and is clothed with it. “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” Rom. 5:2. Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints, and the church is clothed with the glory of God Himself. It is precious to have always God’s true object in view, which cannot stop on this side His glory. If one would get at the bottom of the counsels of God, one must look

to His glory. What makes me, in travelling, pass through such and such a place, is not the desire of seeing that place, but of getting to an end beyond. The sight of the glory sanctifies truly, and gives an object far above all that could be prepared to stop us here on earth. We shall never walk well here below, even in the smallest details, if the great end is not constantly before our eyes. If I have any object on this side the glory, even the welfare of the church in detail, my soul will suffer from it. In this consists that which elevates all the Christian does—if in everything he has the glory of God in view.

The Father, we have seen, is never mentioned in the Revelation; nor have we here the children of the Father, but the bride of the Lamb. This book speaks of government and glory; and God, in this book, takes all His titles save that of Father. The apostles of the Lamb (v. 14), not the twelve tribes of Israel, are the foundations of the city. The prophets knew that these things were not for themselves, but for us; i Pet. i:12.

There is a perfect order. The golden reed (v. 15), the exact righteousness of God, measures all and judges all. The result of the work of God is perfect. Nothing is wanting; nothing is too long; nothing is too short. All is perfectly regulated. Not a stroke of the hammer remains to be given. All is perfect—God is the Architect.

Verse 18. God's glory is the building of the wall; this jasper represents God. Christ is girded with pure gold, and it is said, "Righteousness is the girdle of his loins." It is the divine righteousness accomplished in Jesus, not the earthly. Verse 21. There is also purity, transparent glass, the perfect purity of God, which can no longer be defiled; chap. 15:2. The purity is no more of water, but of

glass; it is consolidated, and rendered firm. The church, one with Christ, is seen there, having the righteousness of God, His purity, His holiness. The justice of man does not become a Christian. One cannot mix together with grace the earthly justice, which says “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.” The righteousness of heaven can ally itself with grace, and the only righteousness that becomes a Christian is a heavenly righteousness. It gives, and no longer exacts. God having communicated His nature to the Christian, he is raised above sin, and is made partaker of God’s holiness; 2 Pet. 1; Heb. 12. The true character of the Christian is that of divine righteousness and holiness, and that of grace—what becomes God, when He is manifested as man. We want faith to lose our fortune and to forgive; but if it is coming out of the society of man, it is entering into that of God. What a portion for us, and how it does elevate our souls! This righteousness, this holiness of God, cannot be fully manifested until the church is seen in glory.

The difference of the stones (v. 19, 20) contains details which are above my knowledge. It is said of Satan, that before his fall he walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire—that every precious stone was his covering; Ezek. 28:14. The precious stones were on the breastplate of the high priest. These stones are not pure light, but the reflection of the divine glory, where the most elevated creature walked before its fall. It is in that position that Christ places the church on His heart, as high priest, and in the full manifestation of which He places her in the glory. The church is in that glory. It is what is nearest to God when the question is about the glory. It is the radiancy of divine glory reflected, and manifested in its varied beauty in the creature, and this

in its most immediate relationship with God, a radiancy of divine light on and through the creature. In Ezekiel, this is the case in creation; on the breastplate of Jesus, in grace; here, in glory. In the first case the creature could not maintain itself there. Christ maintains the church there in its weakness. He places her there in the strength He has Himself in the glory. The point here is the right of the sovereignty of God, who places the church in this glory; and not the affection of the Father to His children.

Verse 21. The twelve gates are twelve pearls—that is, what is beautiful, the perfection of moral grace in the church, a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:46): it was what Christ had looked for. The street of the city is of pure gold, as it were transparent glass; no defilement is any longer possible. Jesus will no more have to wash our feet in order that we may enter into the presence of God for our worship. In the glory we shall be standing on purity. The more we walk there, the more we shall get into purity, without having the need of conscience to be on our guard. The more we then let go our affections, the more we shall praise God. This is great rest to him who loves holiness. The precious stones express the solid basis of our glory, and we shall walk on purity. This is heavenly rest.

Verses 22-27. There is no more temple—that is to say, nothing that contains and hides the glory of God. God is the temple. He receives and encloses His people. If one came out of the temple, one found the world. Then we shall be shut up in God. He is the intimate centre of everything, as also the circumference of our happiness. If we would come out of purity, we must come out of God, who is infinite. All God’s names in this

dispensation, save that of Father, are here. The Lamb, He who has suffered, and in whom our affections are concentrated, is also the temple. God shall be the Sun of the city (v. 23) and we shall know as we have been known. This has consequences. The nations upon the earth, spread in the judgment, walk in its light, the light of the city. Jesus saith, “The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me,” John 17:22-29. There will be a world which shall know it and see it, in the manifestation of that glory. The affection of the bride delights in the glory that belongs to the Lamb, and the bride is manifested in that glory.

The church, which is the manifestation of the goodness and of the glory of God, shall be the light of the world. It is in our glory that the world shall understand what a Saviour we have had. What joy for us, in whom will be seen, in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus! (Eph. 2:7). When the world shall see us there, it will then understand that God has loved us as He has loved Jesus. Everything corresponds with our portion here below. The earthly Jerusalem will take vengeance (shall execute the vengeance) on God’s enemies. We are here on earth the instruments of the grace and of the glory of God. Sinners may speak of it from the heart. This will continue in heaven. The church shall be in the glory, the testimony rendered to grace; and the earthly Jerusalem shall exercise the severity of justice against sin. God is now rejected and despised in us; He shall then be glorified in us.

Isaiah 60 shews that the earthly Jerusalem has the earthly government and the rights of the justice of God.

“The nation that will not serve her shall perish,” v. 12. As to the heavenly Jerusalem, the nations of those who are saved shall walk in her light. All that God shall perfect in the glory ought to be manifested through the Holy Ghost here on earth. By anticipation the Holy Ghost gives us the foretaste of this glory. And the knowledge of that glory is a principle of action which the world can never understand; but it can see the fruits of it. The selfishness of the world understands the grace that is in the Christian, which can forgive; but, in principle, that grace is foolishness to him. Yet, although the world does not understand our motives, it sees the faithfulness, which is a testimony rendered to grace. May God be sanctified in us by the sight of that glory!

The beginning of chapter 22 shews us the relations of the heavenly city with the earth and the world. The world will see that we have been loved, and will know how much we have been loved, when at the appearing of Jesus we shall appear also with Him in glory. When He appears, it must be before some one. His appearing is the manifestation of His glory in the world where He has been rejected, but which God made the theatre of all that He manifested of Himself. It is there that sin entered; that Satan reigns; that man has lived in open revolt against God; that angels have served; that Jesus has suffered; that He has conquered hades, death, and the prince of this world. Nothing is more simple than God’s manifesting the glory of Jesus and that of Christians in this world, where they were despised. We shall now see the great principles of that glory.

The earthly Jerusalem has almost all the characters of the celestial one. Yet there is an essential difference. It is in the heavenly Jerusalem that the glory is, and it is

from thence that it shines upon the earthly Jerusalem. Our Christian discipline here in the earth enables us to manifest this glory. The earthly Jerusalem is upon the earth, the seat of the government of God in justice. The glory requires that all the nations should be brought low; Zech. i:21; 2:8-13; 8:22, 23, etc. Under Israel we see the patience of God in government, with the incapacity of Israel to profit by it. Under the government of the New Jerusalem the law will be put in their heart (Ezek. 36:27), and will enable them to answer to this government of God, and God will manifest His glory there, “and my people shall be all righteous.”

In the heavenly Jerusalem there is a display more complete and more intimate of the resources that are in God to bless, if there are any miseries, and not obedience. In heaven are the fruits thereof continually presented in all their richness and in all their variety. At the same time there are also on the tree of life the leaves destined for the healing of the Gentiles. In Eden, man’s innocence was put to the test. There were the two trees, the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The life, without which man can do nothing, and responsibility—such are the principles of all religion.

As to responsibility, man found himself in two positions—in innocence and in sin;48 that is, in Eden and under the law. The law requires obedience after the knowledge of good and evil is entered; and if there is evil, the only effect of the presence of God is to make us haste away as fast as possible. The law acts on the responsibility of man who has the knowledge of good and evil, and brings it to bear on him, but does not give life.

Christ has taken up man when hopeless on the ground of his own responsibility. He took the responsibility on Himself, and has given life. He becomes thus everything to man. He comes as expiation and as mediation, puts Himself under the responsibility according to all the requirement of God, gives full satisfaction, takes upon Himself all the result of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and takes the place of the other tree, and imparts life. Man ate, not of the tree of life, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When man places himself under responsibility, he is surely lost. To recognise that Christ is the source of life, and yet to keep the responsibility of one's own salvation, is to be in confusion and in fear. Christ must answer as Mediator, and be the source of life. Thus it is that pure grace is the only way in which we can have to do with God. We shall even see traces of these things in the heavenly Jerusalem. Everything concerning ourselves is accomplished. Life and responsibility being united, it is a joy for us, as well as for the angels, to do the will of God. May God enable us to understand and to apprehend well these two principles, life and responsibility! If we take the responsibility upon ourselves, it is all over with us—we are undone.

Life is represented here under two figures: (1) A river of living water. We have not only the life in us, but we are drinking for ever of that life which proceeds from the throne of God, and flows in abundance through the city. (2) A tree of life. One might have eaten in Eden of the tree of life, but in that tree there was no principle of healing. Here this is not the case. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the Gentiles. This tree of life is more blessed. Those that are in the city find food in its

fruit, and from its leaves proceed the resources of life for those who are still on the earth. There is the joy of communion. We drink of the river of living water. Although this is the highest joy, yet it is a joy also, even for God, to do good to those who are in want. It is grace, it is goodness. We are made partakers of that joy in the holy city; we shall enjoy there the grace which heals, as well as the grace of drinking in His holiness. There is joy in heaven for one sinner that repents.

Thus in the heavenly Jerusalem, there is neither innocence without grace, nor responsibility and the law without life.

Verses 3, 4. There is the centre of all authority—the throne of God and of the Lamb. The rest there shall not be a rest of idleness. His servants shall serve Him. Nothing shall separate us from God, and we shall see His face; and in our foreheads (v. 4) nothing will be seen that is not the expression of God. All that God is, His name, shall be in our foreheads (that is to say, manifested in us in the most visible manner). Slaves had the name of their masters marked in their foreheads. We shall see the face of God. The pure in heart shall see God. The whole world shall see that we are the servants of God. All this is even before the world a plain manifestation of what God is. Verse 5. All that is here is an eternal state for the church.

Chapter 22:6-21

Verses 6, 7. Here terminates this description. When the Last Adam shall have exercised His power to re-establish all the things mentioned by the prophets, then shall be the end. He shall be Priest after the order of Melchisedec, Priest seated on His own throne, to praise

God and to bless the world. This rebellious world shall then be made subject to Him. This is the form that the mediation will take at that time—not hidden, as it is now, but with His people.

Verse 10. There is here a remarkable expression. God had told Daniel to seal the prophecy (chap. 12:4); here, on the contrary, for the church, He says not to seal the prophecy. It is not denied that Jesus is coming again, nor do men intend to deny the coming dispensation; but its power over the conscience is avoided by saying "My Lord delayeth his coming." But Jesus says "Behold, I come quickly," and He delays not, but is patient, willing that all should repent. Therefore it is that God would not that the Revelation should be sealed. He says, "I come quickly." In principle, nothing between the present moment and the coming of the Lord prevents the believer's laying hold of His coming. God will have the coming of Jesus to be a thought dear to my heart and nigh; therefore He will not seal anything. God will not have anything in the heart of the believer, which separates between the time when the prophecy was given and the coming of Jesus.

At the epoch of the Reformation it was the explanation of this book (see Luther's work, entitled "The Captivity of Babylon") that gave power to come out of the iniquity and the corruption of the professing church. And if it was not the accomplishment of the thing itself in full, yet the principle was apprehended, and its application to what was displayed in his time.

Verse 16. In the beginning of the Revelation Jesus is set forth as the Root of David. Here He calls Himself the Root and Offspring of David, because He has taken His

place of King, as Son of David. Here it is that the church on the earth comes again on the scene, as vessel of the testimony (that is to say, the prophecy is ended). In the prophetic part, the church is not seen unless it be in heaven prophetically. But He, who has borne the testimony, presents Himself here in Person. This awakens the affections of the spouse, and the church's desire is that He would come.

We may see also how the coming of Jesus is addressed to all classes of persons. First (v. 7), "Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." I have no doubt but that this is a warning to us, and to anyone else; for the church is instructed in this book of all that is going to happen, and of the fruits and principles of the world, and of the world which calls itself Christian. But this exhortation applies to those that shall be found here when the church is gone, in the circumstances of which the book treats (v. 12). The coming of Jesus is addressed and presented to all, as bringing with itself the consequences of their works; and then, prophecy being at an end, Jesus presents Himself personally, "I Jesus, I am," etc. This is that which awakens the desires of the church, which is His already, and which knows Him; and upon this He declares in answer, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly."

Verse 17. This verse gives the normal position of the church while waiting for Jesus. It is not the bride only who calls for the Bridegroom; it is the Spirit and the bride. This desire of the bride is authorised and sanctioned by the Spirit Himself. It is not anything from the Spirit that one expects. It is the Spirit which desires, and He cannot desire the Spirit. The bride desires, and

she desires the Bridegroom and not the Spirit. “Come quickly, Lord Jesus!” If I desire a millennium without Christ, it is not saying “Come quickly,” but it is saying Delay at least a thousand years. The church says naturally “Come,” if she has apprehended her privileges. There are souls who have not apprehended these privileges of the church; therefore He says, “Let him that heareth say, Come.” The church has already the river of life; and so she says to him that is athirst, “let him come,” for I have the river of life: “and whosoever will, let him take of the living water freely” (for I have it); let him take of it freely. The church presents grace while waiting for the Bridegroom: it is her duty and her privilege to invite those who are athirst to take of the water of life that she possesses. Having the Holy Ghost, the church invites to drink of this living water. Come and drink! The betrothed of Jesus, she says to the Bridegroom, “Come.” How desirable is her position here! As for herself, her affections are fixed above on Christ, whom she is expecting, and whom she desires. Meanwhile she is depositary and witness in grace of the grace she enjoys. She does not say, If any one is athirst, let him come to me, as Jesus could say; but it is her place, through grace, to say “Come and drink.” Nothing urges more to the plainest and most faithful evangelisation, than the thpught that Jesus is coming quickly. On the other hand, if you are wishing for money, or seeking to make provision for placing your children in the world, or if you have any plans for the future, you cannot wish for the Lord Jesus to come; and if you cannot, then your hearts are not right with Jesus. For Christians, it is a melancholy state. And if any one does not own the Lord, nothing is more awful than the coming of Jesus: it is judgment for such a one.

May God purify our hearts, in order that we may desire that Jesus would come quickly! Amen.

1 Geneva.

2 I speak only as to the mode of communication; the whole is of course inspired.

3 Nevertheless, although God the Father makes no more communication to the church, according to the relation of the Head of the body with the members of that body in its unity, yet He leaves here communications of the judgment He forms of the state of things which have the name of the church in the world, whatever its position or state may be The seven churches are taken as a sample of the various states on which He bears this judgment, and thus of warning to all.

4 The word “hereafter” misleads in the English translation. In the French there is no difficulty. The meaning is simply, after the things related in the account of the seven churches. It is simply “after these things.” The whole phrase is this, “The things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these.”

5 In the main, this is true; but it seems to me that the ordinary interpretation (that God was seen as seated there at Jerusalem) is not quite correct. God sitting on the cherubim comes to judge the city. The glory of God comes from the north; it is the judgment executed by the Chaldeans; Ezek. 1:4. This glory stood in the plain; chap. 3:23. Ezekiel, carried to Jerusalem, finds again the glory there; chap. 8.

6 The glass clear as water presents holiness itself settled in an unchangeable manner. The water purified that which was defiled according to this same holiness.

7 The church is not, properly so called, a dispensation. It is the assembling together the co-heirs in unity, whilst the kingdom is in mystery. When the law ends as a dispensation, the kingdom is not yet established in power, and all is in transition. Here the saints are seen above, and the throne of God is in relation with the earth.

8 Most of the modern editions read here, after the authority of the best MSS., “has redeemed [us] … and they shall reign.” In that case it would be the song of those that are already above, who rejoice that their brethren, who are still here in the persecution, shall be delivered and shall reign.

9 It appears to me that they are those who suffered before the last tyranny of Antichrist. (See Revelation 20:4.)

10 We must add here the saints of the Old Testament, and, to meet the full force of the expression, even others also; Dan. 11. But at that time all will not be in heaven; v. 11. There are those who dwell on the earth. The church is a stranger and pilgrim there, as well as all the saints who lived before the coming of Jesus. (See Hebrews 11.)

11 I do not think that it is the church properly so called, as a whole; but those who have lost their lives for their testimony, and, as it seems to me, more particularly during the time when, as a church recognised on earth, she is no more there. Indeed, the church, as such, is not found again till the marriage of the Lamb.

12 This description in chapter 7 appears to me the least precise of any we have in the Revelation; but it is evident that what is said here does not amount to the normal position of the church. The elders speak of them as of a distinct class. The multitude ascribes their salvation to God, as He is revealed in the Revelation sitting on the throne. The whole chapter seems a preparation for what is going to take place, and presents to us beforehand the elect, who will be found in it, but whom God will preserve through the tribulation of that hour, from which those who keep the word of the patience of Christ shall be kept. However, this multitude is connected with the elders, but their joy is only that of consolation and of rest, and does not, beforehand, and for others, enter into the intelligence of God's ways like those in chapter 5. Neither do they sing.

13 It is important to observe attentively the expression, as in fact this multitude is distinct from the twenty-four elders. No mention is made of heaven in a direct manner, save the expressions, "temple," and "before his throne."

14 This is true in one sense, but also it was before God as in heaven. Morally speaking, no one could, as to the antitype, enter there but as newborn, and Christ lifted up from the earth was before God. The court was, in certain aspects, the court of heaven, and not the world outside. It was a place of transition. The brazen sea, for instance, which was in the court, is seen here in heaven; the souls under the altar (burnt offerings) are in heaven. Nor is there any veil here. "I, if I be lifted up," says Christ, "will draw all men unto me." He was then rejected by the earth, and (though not yet ascended into heaven) had ceased to be a living man, Messiah on the

earth—lifted up to God in glorifying Him—He still was in view of man below, and thus became the perfect and attractive meeting place.

15 It appears to me that this is more immediately connected with, and confined to, the Jews (but they are identified with the Gentiles who are in the land. The same is seen in Isaiah 66)—to speak more exactly, to Palestine.

16 This gives the Psalms a character worthy of remark. Deliverance is effected through the execution of judgments, which are therefore demanded. The church, on the contrary, will comes out of all by ascending up into heaven. The Psalms are evidently connected with the Jewish remnant alone in the latter days, and with the consequences proceeding from it, as to the world; also with the work and the sympathies of Christ, which form the basis of it.

17 The writer wrote later as follows:—

As to Daniel, Christ was cut off and took nothing (see margin—the real sense—did not take the kingdom then), after sixty and two weeks, that is sixty-nine. Now we learn from the gospels His ministry was as nearly as possible three years and a half, so that for intelligent faith there is only half a week left, and, in fact, only that of the great tribulation. For unbelief—the beast and the apostate Jews—there is a week; and they enter into covenant for this time, but he breaks it when half through, takes away the sacrifice, and the great tribulation begins—that which is spoken of in Matthew 24, after verse 15, and in Mark 13—and this only in the Revelation.—Letter, February, 1881.

See also in Prophetic Volume 4, “Are there two half-weeks in the Apocalypse?”

18 Some believe that the judgment itself of Antichrist is the third woe. I was made to say so in the first edition of these notes, but I doubt it. I cannot believe that the description given at the beginning of the chapter is that of the last days of the man of sin. The worship of the faithful and the temple of God are preserved intact, and the strong testimony rendered by the two witnesses secured against all attack, those who hurt them being killed. Now, if this be so, this would be the first half week, the other half remains yet to be fulfilled. (Compare Matthew 24:15.) I find it also difficult to believe that it is just at the time of the two witnesses being killed that all terminates. Now, it is at the end of the twelve hundred and sixty days. In chapter 12 we have twelve hundred and sixty days, of which it is said, “woe,” etc., which resemble much more Matthew 24. Neither does it seem to me right to call the judgment of God a woe. We must remember also that the dominion of the beast lasts twelve hundred and sixty days, and that the two witnesses live during the like period. Are they synchronical? I do not think so.

19 It will be found that the number seven is figurative of spiritual perfection, either in good or evil; and twelve, of perfection in man, such as the twelve patriarchs, the twelve apostles.

20 Psalm 80:17. f See footnote on page 32.

21 It appears to me certain, that the testimony of Jesus Christ is the testimony that He has rendered Himself, not the testimony that is rendered unto Him.

22 The order here is to be remarked, viz., the rapture of the male child—the war in heaven—the persecution (through Satan who is cast out of it) of the woman in the earth.

23 Only they are recognised in the form of the beast in verse 4. Prophecy could only belong to the fourth beast now, the Roman empire. It is the most important beast, the one which had to do with the Lord Jesus. The Roman empire has been proved by God through the presence of the Lord Jesus. Jesus was presented to the fourth beast, and condemned by Pilate, as King of the Jews. He was born King of the Jews, and the throne of God on earth belongs to Him. He was rejected of men: nevertheless, the throne belongs to Him, and shall be restored unto Him.

24 In its final destruction, it is characterised as "the false prophet." It is perhaps uncertain whether its destruction, as false prophet, presents anything else but what characterises the beast, the only character it retains in its last relations with the first beast.

25 See footnote on page 78 and the paper re "Antichrist."

26 These notes were taken in 1842.

27 I have some doubt whether the song of the Lamb does not refer here rather to the exaltation of the Lamb in royal power and preferment in the latter day, than to His perfect work on the cross. The Lamb had been slain; but in the Revelation it is ever rather the place He who had been slain takes than His death that is in question. It is that suffering Person that is brought forward. So here. Mercy and truth will then be met together; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Truth shall

flourish out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. These are God's ways. No doubt this was morally accomplished on the cross; but that Psalm speaks of its manifestation in result on earth, and so here. It is the manifestation on earth of these things rather that is sung, not that in which they are known to faith.

28 The idolatry is that by which God characterises its real Satanic evil; its luxury, and pleasure, and gain, that by which man is attracted to it.

29 The best manuscripts add, "and the beast," which would modify what is said here. Thus, in following the will of the beast in the destruction of the woman, it would seem that it is not at the time when her destruction takes place that they give first their power to the beast. It is a proof of their subjection, but not its commencement.

30 With the beast. See the preceding note.

31 There is no doubt but that the abominations presented here, as that which characterise the great whore, are idolatries; religious corruption characterises her. Worldliness and luxury serve as occasions to dazzle the eyes, and to blind and take hold of the heart. All these latter things fall into ruin, but the cause for the judgment is the religious evil. (See the note, page 60).

32 As a general term, fornication is used for idolatry, as the Greek is indeed for adultery.

33 A pagan is in Egypt. Satan is his prince. Israel came out of Egypt—never returned there, but was in captivity in Babylon.

34 I leave this in the text as it is, but I have made some researches in the word, which make me hesitate a little as to this phrase, as regards the special relationships of the two beasts in Revelation 13, and their connection with other passages. However that may be, the two beasts perish together, and the second beast supports the first. What I am doubtful of is, whether some passages which, in general, are applied to the first beast, would not rather apply to the second. See paper in this Volume, “Enquiry into the Antichrist of Prophecy.”

35 But in Daniel we have the details of the history, and, consequently, three horns fall before the little one. Whereas in the Revelation this is omitted, for there we have rather what characterises the beasts, than their history on the earth.

36 The final apostasy, or the revolt, will at the same time go still farther; it will be the denial of the Lord thus known (as outward profession); the denial of the Messiah by the Jews, who will give themselves up to Antichrist; and of God by man, who will extol himself in pride against Him. It will be the full result of the work of Satan, the corruption of the church, or the substitution of his works to the church, in borrowing her name, and his master-piece in sublety and artifice.

37 [Rather, in league with the beast or imperial power of Rome in that day.—Ed.] See footnote page 78.

38 While associated together in their work, some question would arise in my own mind here as to the repartition of the work between the two beasts. See note page 78.

39 I do not alter anything here, because I do not doubt of its being true; but the relation’s of the second beast

with the state of Palestine in the last days are not mentioned here.

40 The warrior judgment by the Lord ends in the destruction of the beast and of its armies; chapter 20:1-3 brings before us Satan bound after this judgment. Verse 4 begins again, and we have to the end of the chapter sessional judgment—sessional judgment on a throne, whether it be at the beginning of the millennium, or during its duration, or after. Verses 3, 4 are not historically consecutive, although generally, in point of the subject, they are so.

41 It is remarkable that while relating how they had rejected all God's appeals to them to return to Him in repentance, Stephen, in making mention of the actual captivity of the Jews, speaks of their sin in the desert, specially of that of idolatry, as the cause.

42 That is to say, where we see them shut up in this chapter.

43 This is very far from being all that is in the blessed Lord's death; but I confine myself to this point here.

44 It appears that the best MSS read here, "they shall reign"; but this does not make any alteration in the argument of the text.

45 Not only did God manifest Himself in Christ, but Jesus gave Himself even unto death, in order that all that God is should be manifested in all God did with regard to Him, and for us through Him, and that all the glory of God, all the truth of His character, should be vindicated and established by that which came upon Jesus.

46 It is interesting to see in Psalms 1 and 2 the rights of Jesus as the righteous man according to the government of God, and His rights according to the counsels of God, as the Anointed, the Christ. In the following Psalms one sees clearly that nothing of all this is yet accomplished, as is well known. But, Christ having suffered, we have in Psalm 8 the great result on the earth of His position as Son of man explained in Hebrews 2. Compare Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:9, 10; and see Luke 9, where He forbids His disciples to announce Him as the Christ, substituting for this title the sufferings and the glory of the Son of man—the portion of the church. Compare also John 11 and 12, where His rights as Son of God and Son of David are set in evidence; and as soon as His right as Son of man begins to dawn, the sufferings present themselves to the Lord, and our participation in those sufferings.

47 I hardly need say here, that this does not mean that there has not been a church on the earth during the ages which have elapsed since Pentecost. I have insisted enough upon this in other writings. There certainly was a church, and in the relation of a bride with Christ through faith. But the marriage was not come, and it is equally evident that the whole of it is not formed before she is in the glory. Her characteristic place is in heaven. She belongs there. What else is here is only the general principle of what God will accomplish in the glory. God wills that man should manifest this before the world, in the power of the Holy Ghost, until Jesus return; and she is here, consequently, the habitation of God through the Spirit.

48 In either case, made subject to a law.

Substance Of A Lecture On Prophecy

Editor's Note49

The following are the points touched upon in the ensuing pages:—

I. Introduction:—The believer, knowing his acceptance in Christ, is put into a position, and has the gift of the Holy Ghost, whereby he may survey all God’s future operations.

1. The purpose of God is to put all things under Christ in glory, and in this the church is associated with Him.

2. The right of Christ to inherit all things is founded upon three titles, viz., the Creator, the Son, and the Man of Psalm 8.

3. The taking of the inheritance will be at His coming, and as a kingdom. The church, being raised then, reigns with Him.

4. Meanwhile, in this present time, the church is being gathered into life by the operation of the Spirit on the preached word.

5. The life so given issues in a resurrection apart from the wicked.

6. Statement of the first resurrection.

7. The hope and calling of the church is to wait for the coming of the Lord—the practical influence of this doctrine.

8. The loss of it has been the church’s ruin considered in its relations here below; an arousing has partially taken

place; neither the one, nor the other, unnoticed in the prophetic word.

9. Character of the Lord's return to the earth, and earthly blessings which follow.

II. The bearing of the coming of Christ upon the world at large.

1. The world is divided into three great classes, viz., the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church. With each of these God has had dealings; and they have all failed: but God is faithful.

2. Sketch of the failure of the Jews, under the law. But they have unconditional promises still remaining to them — they will be restored to their land.

3. Events in this restoration different from any of God's previous dealings with them.

4. The Gentile power, as such, is to end in rebellion against God. Its system will be destroyed by the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

5. The end of the professing church, as such, is apostasy; and the judgment of God, executed by Christ, will also overtake it.

6. Subsequent blessing of the earth under the Messiah, Jerusalem being the metropolis.

7. Conclusion.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," Heb. 9:27, 28.

These two verses teach us two very important facts: first, that death is the natural portion for man, and after that the judgment; but, secondly, that to believers this death and judgment have been met by Christ, and, consequently, they expect with joy His second appearing; they look for Him. Here is the distinction between the saints and the world. The reception, through grace, or refusal of the love of God, creates the contrast, so far as man is concerned, and not any efforts of his own, for he has no power of his own to meet that which he is already in—namely, death! But the believer finds that death and judgment have been met by Christ on his behalf; he consequently loves Him in remembrance of His work; and to such Christ will appear the second time without sin. No doubt He was so personally the first time; but then He came into all the circumstances of sin, He was made sin for us. But, as regards believers, He has, at His second coming, nothing more to do with sin: it will be unto salvation, to put them into possession of the results of His first coming. Salvation will be the consummation of what we at present believe. Seeing Him at the right hand of God, we look for a completion of bliss at His second appearing; and this belief being in the heart, the results are seen in the life—the church's position is that of resting on the effects of His first coming, and it looks for all its results in the second.

This is brought out in Ephesians 1. Believers, we are told (v. 7), "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Then follows the statement of the consequence of our present condition, as "accepted in the beloved." It is this, that we are admitted to the knowledge of the counsels and intentions of God, and

are told that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He will gather together in one all things in Christ (v. 10). In the meanwhile, until the glory come, we have been sealed by His Holy Spirit, “which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,” v. 14. Thus, then, the church has redemption in Christ, and is expecting all things to be gathered together in Him. Meanwhile, it has the Holy Ghost.

1. The Lord Jesus is Himself the centre of all God’s purposes; and I shall endeavour to shew that whatever may regard the church, the Jews, or the Gentiles, is merely the unfolding of His glory. But, more than this, we shall see that the church of God is brought out, not only as enjoying the present blessing of communion, but also as joint-heir with Christ of His coming inheritance. In looking at the glory of Christ, believers are looking at their own glory, as being “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” Rom. 8:17. We have a type or figure of this in Eve. Eve was not a part of the creation, nor was she lord of it as Adam was; but she was associated with him in all his portion of inheritance. And so we shall find the church to be joined with Christ, when He takes His rightful inheritance.

2. As to the purpose of God in Christ—His title to inherit all things is made out in three ways from Scripture; while He Himself makes all of them good by redemption; John 12:32.

First, He has created all things (Col. 1:16), and as He created them, so they are “for Him.” “All things were created by him and for him.” He is the great heir, and He must have possession of them all; by Him all things

are to be reconciled, Col. 1:20. The whole universe will by-and-by be reduced into subjection under Him. The second ground of His title is found in Hebrews 1:2. There it is said, the Son is “appointed heir of all things.” The third ground, which stands in the counsels of God is, that man is to be set over all things. This we learn from Psalm 8, which psalm the apostle Paul uses three times, shewing some points of special importance at each, and always insisting that the Lord Jesus is the man there spoken of. He quotes it in Hebrews 2:6, etc.: “What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thine hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” Paul argues that it leaves “nothing that is not put under him.” “But now,” says he, “we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour.” The half of the prophecy has been accomplished, because the one who is to reign is crowned, and His being at the right hand of God is the pledge that it all will come to pass. We only see what is already accomplished in Jesus. The putting of all things under Him is not yet come to pass; it is neither done nor doing. He has not yet “taken to Himself His great power and reigned” (Rev. 11:17); but He sits hid in God, so far as this fact is concerned, till the time comes when, according to Psalm 110:1, God shall make His enemies to be His footstool.50 Psalm 8 is again brought forward in Ephesians 1:22, and here in its connection with the church’s sharing His portion. Previously the apostle had been praying that they might know the same power, as in actual exercise towards them, which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead; and then He

shews (v. 22, 23) the church as being in very deed His body, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all,” and thus necessarily the sharer with Him of His future glory. He will then be manifestly heir of all things, and Head and Bridegroom to the church. Psalm 8 is again quoted in 1 Corinthians 15. There it is in connection with a kingdom, and also with resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:23-25, “Every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom51 to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet”: then the psalm in question is introduced, verse 27, “For he hath put all things under his feet.” Everything now in disorder is to be put under this Man’s feet, and when all is brought completely into subjection by Him, then the kingdom is to be delivered up.

3. If we refer to 2 Timothy 4:1, we shall find the kingdom connected with His appearing—as being then set up. Further it is plain that Christ’s appearing is not at the end (as is supposed), but at the beginning of the kingdom; for at the end of that period the kingdom is to be delivered up. Thus the apostle speaks: “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.” This passage, too, clearly shews that the common opinion of a day—a twenty-four hours— of judgment, is erroneous, because it is quoted here as lasting a certain time. His appearance is at the beginning of His kingdom, and then there will be a judgment on the living wicked of the nations. On some God’s wrath will specially fall for rejecting His gospel;

but this judgment (greater or less in its exercise) will also run on52 during the period of His kingdom; whilst at the final close of it, be the length what it may, the wicked dead will be judged; and if His appearing be at the beginning of His kingdom, it is clear that the church must be raised and with Him when He takes it; for she is to appear with Him. Christ, as we saw, is the first Man raised, He is the “firstfruits of them that slept”; “afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:15-17); and then begins that kingdom which at the end (that is, at the end of a defined period not spoken of in this chapter)53 He will deliver up to the One who gave it to Him, that is, to God, even the Father, “that God may be all in all,” 1 Cor. 15:28.

4. Christ’s title to inherit all things having been stated, and also the church’s title to heirship with Him, it was nevertheless said, that this, as yet, is but in purpose; for that it is neither done nor doing, but that Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father, and “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool,” Heb. 10:13. If the question be asked, What is doing? The answer is, that during this waiting time, His joint-heirs are being gathered by the operation of the Spirit through the preached word. It may be well briefly to notice how the church is brought out into this blessed connection with Him, now by faith, and hereafter in manifestation: it is by the quickening power of the Last Adam; 1 Cor. 15:45-47. Through this quickening power we are children, sons of God, and brought into the likeness of our Head, as by our natural birth we are in the likeness of the first Adam; so that we are heirs of His glory, just as we are heirs of all the miseries into which we have been introduced by the fall of the first Adam. This is

treated of by the apostle Paul in the way of comparison, in the latter part of Romans 5. The life so given puts us in spirit where Jesus is: “we are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead,” Col. 2:12. It is not a something to be sought for, but we have got the life which, connecting us with our Head, makes us enjoy holiness down here; and we are waiting for the glory, which shall make us actual sharers of what our Head Himself enjoys.

5. It is necessary to see that as this eternal life, which believers have at present in Christ, has nothing in common with the world around; so the issue of it will be in a resurrection of the body at a distinct time, and on a different principle from that of the wicked: a first resurrection (Rev. 20:5), in consequence of a life previously given. The saints are raised because they are one with Him who is risen; they are raised as the result of union with the Lord Jesus; whereas the wicked are raised to be judged by Him, and not at the same time. In Romans 8:11, we find the principle: it is because the Spirit of God already dwells in believers. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

6. There is no such thing in Scripture as a common resurrection. The prevailing opinion is that, at a certain day, all men, whether good or bad, shall stand before God, and then receive their final doom; but Scripture does not speak in this way. It constantly distinguishes between the resurrection of the just and of the unjust. One passage, indeed, might to a careless reader seem to give a colour to such an opinion. In John 6, the Lord speaks of raising up some at the last day; but He speaks

solely of “those whom the Father hath given him”; those who “believed on him”; those who came to Him drawn by the Father, and who “ate his flesh and drank his blood”—terms for believers. He is here speaking of a last day alone to the righteous; there is no allusion to the wicked. The Lord impresses the truth, that, whatever blessing comes, it must be in connection with resurrection. The last day must here have reference to something familiar to Jewish thoughts, as when the disciples, who were Jews by birth, asked Him, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]?” (Matt. 24:3). In every other passage the scripture plainly distinguishes the two resurrections. In Luke 14:14, it is said, “Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” Again, Luke 20:35, “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.” Here is a remarkable distinction— worthiness is attributed to those who obtain this resurrection— it is a distinct class. Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:23, “Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” Nothing can be plainer than this. Again, in 1 Thessalonians 4, “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.”54 Again, Philippians 3:11, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Paul could not be anxious to attain to what the wicked had in common with him, indeed the word means rather from among the dead. (See Peter 1:3.)

A passage in John 5:25-29, is often quoted as settling against the question of a first resurrection— “The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear his

voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [literally, judgment].” But just before (chap. 5:25), the Lord has said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead [those dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1] shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” This hour has lasted through Christ’s life, and eighteen hundred years since. It is the hour, or time, of quickening of souls. There is a period during which souls are quickened, and a period when bodies are raised. The hour of John 5:27-29 will be at the time, the beginning of which there will be to the righteous a resurrection of life; and at the end (be the length what it may) to the wicked a resurrection of judgment. Christ will have no need to judge the children, to cause them to give Him honour, for having given us life (chap. 5:25) we honour Him now. But as “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son”; as, “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow” (Phil. 2:10); so the wicked will be forced to honour Him in spite of themselves, and to them accordingly there will be a resurrection of judgment—a summons to judgment because they have no part in Him; whilst to the righteous, their resurrection will be but the accomplishment, as to their bodies, of a life previously give. Nor will the period of the one be at the same time with that of the other. The raising of the church, or the resurrection of the righteous, will take place when Christ comes; but the raising of the wicked dead not until after, or at the close of Christ’s reign. “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished,” Rev. 20:5.

7. The hope, then, of the church is the coming of Christ. You cannot read the epistles of Paul without seeing that this was a grand truth to be kept as a present thing before the soul. This event has often been confounded with death. We are sometimes told that the coming of Christ is that which happens to every man at his death; but it is something quite different. You cannot apply the passages which speak of it to death; and for this reason, that it will be an event which shall find the living in ease and luxury. “Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory,” Matt. 24:30.

In the mind of the apostle this doctrine, and not death, was linked with every motive to duty, and to a holy walk; and with comfort in every kind of affliction.55 For instance, as a motive to holiness (1 John 3:2, 3): “We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” Again, with comfort in sorrow. The apostolic consolation, when saints were mourning over the loss of their brethren who had died, was, not that they were to go to the place where those who had departed were, but that God would bring those who had departed back again. (See 1 Thess. 4:13-18.) With a motive to patience (James 5:7, 8), “Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.” “Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Again, with comfort in persecution (2 Thess. 1), “To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed.” The coming of one who was gone, who was the object of their affections and hopes, though now they saw Him not, was that which the Holy Ghost presented to animate

their courage and comfort their hearts. This hope was to act on their consciences in a sanctifying way, by taking their affections out of the world, and giving them patience in the trials they were in through faith. And lastly, I may ask: What was the inducement to a zealous preaching of the gospel by Paul, and to a careful tending of the flock, a picture of which is represented to us in 1 Thessalonians 2? It was this, “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (1 Thess. 2:19).56

8. The putting off this blessed event brought in all kinds of evil; yea, we may say the loss of it was the ruin of the church, considered in its earthly relations here below. For what is the sign of the evil servant? He saith, “My lord delayeth his coming,” Matt. 24:48. It was this that brought him “to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken,” v. 49. The church has been unfaithful to her calling, but of this the word of God warns. In Matthew 25, we have the parable of the ten virgins: they are introduced to us as taking their lamps, and going forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom is not the Holy Ghost. We are converted “to wait for his Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:9), and not for the Holy Ghost whom (with reverence be it spoken) we possess already; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13. “While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept,” v. 5. We know that the Lord has tarried for eighteen hundred years, and the whole church has been slumbering and sleeping.

What is it that arouses them? What is it that puts them in their proper position of waiting? Why, the midnight cry (v. 6): “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh”. This, I trust, has in some little

measure gone forth of late years, bringing the church back again to its real hope. All had forgotten it, and all awoke when the midnight cry was made. The real difference between the wise and foolish virgins was this, that one class had oil in their lamps— oil being a type of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the hidden grace—and the others had not. It is not here individual watchfulness, denoting a saint, which is set forth (for all together slept, and all together awoke); but it is the forgetful-ness of the church, as a body, of its hope, and its consequent slothfulness.

9. With regard to the character or manner of the coming, we learn it from Acts 1:10, 11: “And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Now this is quite another thing from Christ’s judging at the end of all things; for then (Rev. 20:11) will be the judgment of the great white throne, the heaven and the earth shall flee away from before His face, and no place shall be found for them. Whereas Christ is to come back as He went away. Further, this coming, as we learn from Acts 3:19-22, is a time, not of the earth, and heaven fleeing away, but of restitution of all things: viz., “that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” The prophets do not speak of things in heaven, but of

the happiness and blessing that is to be on the earth; they speak of “the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9; Hab. 2:14), and of the face of the covering being taken off all people, and of. the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory (compare Isaiah 25:7, 8; and 1 Cor. 15:54). But for these things “he shall send Jesus,” Acts 3:20.

II. But it is time to turn to another part of this subject. If the church is taken away at the coming of the Lord Jesus, what bearing will this coming have upon the world at large (that is, upon Jews and Gentiles)? We have seen that towards the church, viz., believers, its aspect is nothing but blessing. It will be the end of their suffering state, and the beginning of their glorified one. But what will it be to the world? This brings me to a division of the subject.

1. There have been three great things, or systems, set under God in the world, which have all failed; viz., the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God (as to the testimony committed to it); and a short history of their failure, and of God’s future intentions to them, is needful. When God pronounced “Lo-ammi” (not my people) on the Jews, He delivered power into the hands of the Gentiles, in the person of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors; and it has continued ever since. When the Jews or Gentiles (the fourth monarchy, or Roman empire, at that moment appearing in universal dominion) agreed in rejecting the Messiah, God brought in the church—a heavenly people—not to take to itself earthly dominion, but down here to be a witness to Christ, as set at the right hand of God. Now the

scripture represents all these as failing—Jews, Gentiles, and Christendom as such.

2. With regard to the Jews (at present Lo-ammi, or not my people), it is necessary to see that their failure arose from their disobedience to a law which they had promised to observe, and which they consummated in the rejection of Messiah; but they will be restored to the land of Canaan, owing to the free mercy of God, on account of His promises to Abraham, notwithstanding their failure, for which they have been and will yet have to be punished. In Genesis 13:15, we find the land of Canaan given to Abraham and to his seed for ever; and in Genesis 15:13, 14, the prophetic announcement of the captivity of Egypt, and of the recovery thence, and the gift of the land is again made to his seed by an unconditional covenant of God. See also Genesis 17:8. We know that the former part of this took place; that is, the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, and brought to Mount Sinai, where the law was given. God's dealings with them up to that point had been simply in grace. Then it was (Exodus 19:8) that they put themselves of their own will under the law. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." But they failed under this law, as the sin of the golden calf (Exodus 32) witnessed. This, however, did not touch the promises to Abraham. The intercession of Moses (v. 13) is grounded on these promises, and on the oath of God; and it was owing to these that they came into the land at all: so in all God's after dealings with them. Though He chastised them whilst in the land, owing to their broken engagements, and at length cast them out, yet the promises made to Abraham still remain certain to them. See Leviticus 26; Micah 7:20.

3. There are two great principles connected with their final restoration, which seem to distinguish it from all previous dealings, however gracious, with them. First, they will be planted in the land, under the new covenant; Jer. 31:31-40. Secondly, they will have the presence of the Messiah; Ezekiel 34:23, 24; chap. 37:21-28; chap. 43:7; Jeremiah 33:14, 26. When Messiah first came, they rejected Him; but even that, while it filled up the measure of their guilt, did not touch the promises given without condition. Many of those in Isaiah, that in 2 Samuel 7, and those in Amos 9:11-15, remain still unaccomplished.

4. With regard to the Gentile power, it was not only to end in sin, but in open rebellion against God: but in this the professing Christian world was to have a large and leading share.57 It had, as was before stated, its origin in Nebuchadnezzar; it was afterwards continued in the Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies. The latter was in existence at the time of Christ, and, instigated by the Jews, used the power originally given by God in putting to death His own Son; Acts 4:25, 26, 27. This power will continue, until “the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, shall break in pieces and consume these kingdoms” in their last form, viz., under the ten kings who give their power to the beast; Daniel 2:40-44; Rev. 17:11-14.

And here I must stop to remark upon a great error which prevails, viz., that the little stone was the setting up of Christ’s kingdom at the day of Pentecost, and that it has been growing into a great mountain ever since; or, in other words, that the preaching of the gospel, in the present dispensation, is that which is to convert the world. Now, let it be observed that the stone does not

begin to grow until it has broken in pieces the great image. After this, it becomes a great mountain and rills the whole earth. It is not a diffusive principle which insinuates itself into the system of the image, and changes its moral character and condition; but its operation is destructive of the whole system of the image, which becomes as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, before the stone begins to grow into a mountain. The scripture does not speak of the universal prevalence of Christianity while the image subsists: it says that the stone must destroy the whole being of their empires by the destruction of the last, and then become itself the centre of a new system. The little stone is really typical of Christ coming to judgment, and His kingdom will be established after this, when, indeed, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah 11:9.

But again, in Revelation 16, we are told, that three unclean spirits are to go forth, as the spirits of devils, working miracles, "unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Is this the gospel bringing the whole world under subjection to Christ? Whatever interpretation of this passage we may give as to details, it is manifestly the wide extended exercise of Satan's corrupting and malignant influence to gather together the powers of this world, in the last times, to conflict with, and consequent judgment by, Almighty God; Zeph. 3:8, 9.

5. But what of the professing church? Scripture is not silent here. The end is failure and ruin, as everything has been that has ever been intrusted to man. First, there is a positive revelation in Matthew 13 of tares in

the field, where the Son of man had sowed. This was not common heathenism, nor unconverted sinners, as men; but evil entering into the place where good was sown. The question was asked whether they were to be rooted up; and the answer was, No. It is not the work of the present dispensation to root out, but to sow. We may preach the gospel, but the evil must go on where the good seed was sown, till the harvest of judgment. But, secondly, the days of the Son of man (Luke 17) are likened to the days of Noah and Lot. “Even thus,” is the portentous conclusion, “shall it be when the Son of man is revealed.”

Again, so far from blessed days coming, Scripture reveals that “in the last days perilous times shall come.” 2 Tim. 3:1. And then follows, almost word for word, the same character of the professing church, as is given of the heathen, as under the sentence of a reprobate mind. (Compare 2 Tim. 3:2-5, with Rom. 1:28-32.) Yes! the revealed end of the professing church is that of iniquity, like the heathen; at the same time a form of godliness, something, it may be, very beautiful to attract the eye, but rottenness and dead men’s bones within. Again, the mark of the close of the church is revealed in 1 John 2:18: “Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.” This was the characteristic of the last time—not incoming and outflowing blessings, but Antichrists who sprang from the church, precursors of the Antichrist (whom Christ is to destroy), and not of general blessing before the judgment.

Again, in 2 Thessalonians 2, we have evil traced through its course from the apostle’s time to Christ’s appearing,

leaving no room for intervening universal blessing. “The mystery of iniquity doth already work [says Paul]: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume,” etc. It had begun in the apostle’s time, and would go on until Christ came.

But in Jude, the declension and falling away is still more palpable: he gave all diligence [v. 3] to write unto them of the common salvation, that is, it was his wish to have enlarged on this common blessing, but he was hindered, and was obliged to exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. So far from there being an extension of good, he found the time already come to contend against evil; evil men having crept in unawares, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is, they specially denied the lordship of Christ—first, morally, and then in open rebellion. Here is the character of Antichrist: he denies the Father and the Son, he denies that Jesus is the Christ (i John 2:22), and he denies Jesus Christ come in the flesh; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7. But did Jude contemplate a bettering of such a state? No. His words are, “Enoch prophesied of thee, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all,” etc. (v. 14, 15). These very men that had crept in, forced him to say, These are the men that have been already prophesied about. He refers them, in verse 11, into three classes, a kind of triple character of the apostasy, shewing also the progress which the evil in man’s nature makes. Firstly, Cain: natural evil, hatred. Secondly, Balaam: ecclesiastical corruption, preaching for reward. Thirdly, Core: independence against God,

standing up against His supremacy, denying Christ in His Lordship and Priesthood.58 And in this open rebellion, or gainsaying, they perish.

6. The judgment being thus shewn, the inquiry may be made, How, and through what agency, is the earth, and especially the land of the Jews, hereafter59 to be blessed, according to what has been previously insisted upon? The reply is, that the judgment is not absolute and universal; and though it will fall very heavily upon Jerusalem (Zech. 13:8, 9), and indeed upon all the nations (Isaiah 66:16; Jer. 25:31), yet "a remnant shall return," Isaiah 1:9, chap. 10:21, 22; chap. 66:18, 19. The Jewish remnant who escape the great trouble of the latter day (Jer. 30:7), will be the seed or nucleus of the future nation and their city, Jerusalem, the metropolis of the world. "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house … shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it; … for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," Isaiah 2:1, 2. When "her light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her," "Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising," Isaiah 60:1-3. Or, as it is expressed in another passage, "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit," Isaiah 27:6. After the judgment (greater or less in extent, according to greater or less light, Luke 12:47, 48) on the living, we have abundant testimony from Scripture of the Gentiles being brought under the gracious yet truthful sway of the Lord Jesus, the centre of His actings being Jerusalem. (See, among other

passages, Zeph. 3:8, 9; Psalm 71; Zech. 8:20-23; Rom. 11.)

7. This is not the same as the blessing of the church. It is in the heavenly places that we are blessed, having anticipated the day when Israel “shall look on him whom they have pierced,” Zech. 12:10. We have our portion even now in “heavenly places “(Eph. 1:3); much more, then, at the time when He is manifested. Nor need we be downcast by the evil around. Having oil in our lamps —the grace of the Spirit in our hearts—let the night be as dark as it may, the believer will be able to say, “Even so come, Lord Jesus.” Having redemption through the precious blood, and being quickened by the Spirit, let our affections be so sanctified as to desire nothing else. Let us separate ourselves from everything that He will judge at His coming, and so shall we not be ashamed.

49 Delivered at Sidmouth, 1843.

50 He says (Heb. 2:5), “Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come” (literally “the coming habitable world”) “The world to come” is not heaven, but this earth, which is to be subjected under the dominion of man, and that man—Christ.

51 We learn that there is to be a kingdom in existence, from the fact of its being delivered up at the end. Christ has not yet taken His kingdom, but at the end He is to deliver it up. It is plain the kingdom must begin when He comes, and be delivered up at a certain period not mentioned here.

52 See Isaiah 65:12, 20; Jeremiah 31:29, 30; Zechariah 14:17, 18, 19.

53 Revelation 20 defines the time of His kingdom as lasting a thousand years.

54 This scripture is not used as relying on the word “first,” which only means before the living are changed, but as showing that, raised or changed, they are dealt with apart from the wicked.

55 Death is not the Bridegroom, and, though its sting be taken away, cannot be the object of our affections, though we may joy in that which is beyond it; nor is it the time of the accomplishment of our hopes, nor of Christ’s and the church’s glory.

56 See also the following scriptures:—1 Corinthians 1:7; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:2, 4, 23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:1; 1 Timothy 6:14; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:16, etc. These passages, when examined, will be found not alone to prove the doctrine, but to be knit up with the thoughts, hopes, affections, motives, and every element of daily life in the Christian—not to mention many texts in which the Lord Jesus presents it as characterising the saint. “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord,” Luke 12:36.

57 Much care is needful to distinguish between the civil and ecclesiastical form of the so-called Christian world. Both, will suffer under God’s hand: the powers of the world, because they will deny God in the abstract, and give their kingdoms to the beast; and the so-called professing church, for its departure from the truth of God. But while Scripture distinguishes the two, they are ‘in fact one and the same. The difficulty arises from this, that the church of God, instead of keeping its heavenly conversation or citizenship (Phil. 3:20), has leagued itself with the powers of the world, so that they are

become one and the same thing to all appearance. Let it be borne in mind, then, that the powers of the world mentioned in this lecture are not heathen powers, but those bearing the name of Christ. A prayerful study of the middle portion of the book of Revelation, where the beast and the false prophet are treated of, must be resorted to by those who wish for clear views on this point of the subject, where they will see the issue of this combination.

58 The sin of Koran was his denying the order of priesthood appointed by God. God's order is now different; for all His children are priests (see 1 Peter 2:5), and all have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." See Hebrews 10:19.

59 In the blessing of the earth, it is not meant to include those whose final doom has been previously sealed.

Studies On The Book Of Daniel

Editor's Note60

Preface

The meditations herewith offered to Christians pretend in no way to give a complete explanation of the book of Daniel. The following is the account of them. They were delivered before a small company, whose minds had been already occupied about prophecy, and who had desired to have some help as to this book. The author imparted to them, in a course of lectures, the light which he possessed. Notes were taken at the time, and, the manuscript having fallen into the hands of a third person, he (supposing that the notes would be valuable to others) began to print them. The author offered no hindrance, except the doubt whether they were worth the trouble, and in yielding he did what was needful for the publication, though at some distance from the place where it was undertaken. It will be seen, that a certain basis of interpretation is supposed as being already recognised in the mind of the reader. In the study of the prophecies especially we must expect to go through a certain exercise of mind. But if it is not worth while to take thus much pains, neither is it to read these lectures nor the book they treat of.

The author’s confidence is in God, who, if He approve this feeble effort to help the weak ones, will extend His all-powerful aid in giving them understanding, for wisdom comes from God. It is to Him and to His grace, dear reader, that the author recommends you, asking

your prayers for him, in case you get the least profit from this little book.

Lecture 1 Chapters 1 And 2

The book of Daniel has reference to the time during which Israel, the people of God, are under subjection to the Gentiles. At its opening we discover an accomplishment of the threat made to Hezekiah; Isaiah 39:6, 7. The throne of God has been taken from Jerusalem; the power and the kingdom have been transferred to the Gentiles; and Israel, as to its actual state (being no longer, by the judgment of God, His people) is kept in captivity. But God does not abandon them: only He administers His blessings according to their actual necessity. The things most needful for them to know, under their existing trials, were the history of this dominion of the Gentiles, to which they were subjected, and also the effect of these changes upon the promises which belonged to them. And as the glory of God was to be considered in this great transference of power, it was important to know how the Gentiles would use it, or what their conduct would be, whether towards God or themselves (the Jews), under this responsibility conferred on them.

The book, then, embraces two principal subjects: Firstly, the character and conduct of the four monarchies, which occupy the period called “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24), namely, from the time that God had retired from Jerusalem (His throne being no longer there), and had transferred imperial power over the world to the Gentiles, until the time of the re-establishment of His throne.

And, secondly, the relationship of these nations with Israel His people, during the period in which the supremacy that had been confided to them was in exercise. And all this is of practical importance. For the Christian is informed of the result of the politics of this world, and, being “warned of things not seen as yet,” he separates himself, whether in heart or in action, from all that of which the result will be so sad. Besides, an acquaintance beforehand with all that is to take place keeps him tranquil and composed. There is no need that he should give his heart to the world which surrounds him, for he knows by the written revelation of God both its course and its end. But further, such prophetic intimation is precious to us, not alone because it refers to Christ, and to the people beloved of God, but also because, in every communication which God makes to us, there is a sensible joy in the very fact that He speaks to us. Are not our souls happy in communion with Him? Now this is the case in the prophecies, as in every other part of the word; we feel our nearness to Him and His goodness to us. Thus our faith in Him is strengthened, and the sanctification of our souls increased and established.

This book accordingly is divided into two parts, sufficiently distinct, according to the two great subjects which it contains: six chapters occupy the first, and six others the second part. The first six contain, not the communications made to Daniel, except to interpret them, but the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, or the things which befell the heads of the empire. We have the great general principles of the Gentile monarchies given to us, or their public history in the world announced to their rulers or manifested in their conduct. The last six

chapters are communications made to the prophet himself, and reveal not only the history of these empires, but what they are in the eyes of God; they also furnish details of their (the Gentiles') relationship with the Jews, and of the worship still maintained by the Jewish people. This last was important to Daniel, who, as a prophet, had the people and glory of God at heart, as well as the general history of these empires.

It is instructive to mark the character of the man who became the depositary of the intentions of God in this time of distress and captivity of His people. First, he refuses to defile his soul in partaking of the delicate food of this world. God, who prepares and orders everything for the well-being of those who walk faithfully, in whatever circumstances they are placed, disposed the heart of the chief of the eunuchs in favour of Daniel and his three companions: this eunuch, under whose charge they were, conceived a great regard for them. Moreover, God answers the prayers of Daniel, who "became fairer and fatter in flesh," than any of those who had given themselves over to the ways and nourishment of this world. In a word, Daniel is faithful in all that constitutes a complete separation from the world, according to the Jewish rites, in refusing to eat of meats from the table of a pagan monarch; and this conduct of faith, which was in appearance blamable, meets the approval of God. The personal behaviour of Daniel is the basis of and introduction to the revelation of the whole book. It is the same with us. Separation from the world— a decided refusal to have our portion in that which it furnishes— puts us into a position to receive those communications from God, which, whilst their fulness is contained in the written word, we never receive but through the direct

teaching of God (that is, for it to be the teaching of faith), whatever be the instrument which God may make use of to impart such communications to us.

God soon finds an occasion in which Daniel is to serve Him as a witness, after having, through His grace, disposed him for the undertaking. He often acts by ways which leave the world completely at fault. He permits Nebuchadnezzar's memory to fail him, in order to force him into dependence upon the prophet whom God had chosen to shew forth His divine wisdom.

Notwithstanding, at the actual moment, Daniel knew no more than others how to resolve the difficulty. God made him feel his dependence; but he had faith, and faith and dependence are identified. At the instance of Daniel, he and his companions seek the God of heaven in prayer;61 God answers them, making use of all the difficulties of the case to identify Himself with the poor remnant of His people.

Hereupon Daniel's first act is, not to hasten to the king to inform him of the discovery of the secret, and to rejoice in the deliverance, but he turns with thanksgiving to the God who had heard him. He attributes to Him all that could give comfort to the remnant during the supremacy of these ungodly and rebellious Gentile powers (chap. 2:21).

Daniel, when introduced into the presence of the king, is not elated; he conceals himself, so to speak, behind the glory of God. It is when we understand how to humble ourselves thoroughly, that we are truly exalted. If Daniel disappears, God Himself is manifested in him. Oh that we might have wisdom and spiritual power to hide ourselves thus behind Jesus, in order that He might be

put into the foreground! Every such act is a great and precious", triumph.

As to the interpretation of the dream, a few words will suffice, as the light upon this is almost universal. All acknowledge the dream to speak of the four great monarchies, viz., the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. In verses 37, 38 dominion is given to Nebuchadnezzar by the God of heaven— a universal dominion—absolute in its character over the earth, though not over the seas. There is no information given how far this dominion has been realised, but the gift was bestowed; and it is the first monarchy which, it appears, possessed this power in the most pure and absolute way. It was in the person of its chief "the head of gold." The fourth was to break everything in pieces by its power; but at the end it was to be divided, and in this condition it was to be both strong and weak; a result of the union of the empire and of the original principle of its existence with heterogeneous elements (that is, in my judgment, of barbarians with that which was, properly speaking, Roman).

At the end, the God of heaven, will establish the kingdom of Christ, who will put aside all these monarchies by an act of judgment. We must bear in mind that the kingdom of Christ in this place is His kingdom established in power in the world, and not the blessed influence of the gospel of His grace. The first act of the little stone, before it grows and becomes a great mountain which fills the whole earth, is to fall upon the statue, so that it becomes as the chaff of the summer threshing floor. The stone does not become a mountain until after that. In other words, when Christ shall have executed a judgment which shall break in pieces and

destroy the power of the Gentiles, then His kingdom (an earthly kingdom, and one still of judgment) shall fill the earth.

In chapter 2 the moral history of these monarchies is not touched upon nor their conduct signalised. These will have their place in the four following chapters. I shall only here point out the marks which are given to us as characterising them, as we shall return to them in another lecture.

The first is idolatry, or the civil power endeavouring to make the people submit to a law of unity in worship, the object being a statue set up by the civil power. The second is that the heads of the empire become beasts. That is, they lose the consciousness of being set in relationship with God; and, instead of being in dependence upon Him according to the light given from above, which is the only and true glory of man, they, having lost this light, descend to the rank of beasts. The third is impiety, seen in the conduct of the imperial power towards the Jews, and the God of the Jews, whose name, and all that had reference to His worship, it dishonours. The fourth is self-exaltation. The head of the empire makes himself God, and forbids prayer to be addressed to any other than himself.

In all these events the history ends by the exaltation of the true God. In the first, the Gentile acknowledges the God of those who had preferred the fiery furnace to idolatry. In the second, it is the Gentiles themselves who confess the God of heaven, who humbled them when they walked in pride—a pride of which Babylon was the centre. In the third, it is judgment executed against the "wicked king." In the fourth, it is not alone the God of

heaven who is proclaimed, but His power is established with authority, and His kingdom is acknowledged as that which shall endure for ever.

Lecture 2 Chapters 3-6

You will remember that chapter 2 gave a general history of the period taken up by the whole of Daniel. This was revealed in a dream which Daniel recalled to Nebuchadnezzar, and of which he gave the interpretation. It is the history of the times of the Gentiles. The four monarchies are brought before us, and their final dispersion, by the judgment which the little stone (the kingdom of Christ—Christ Himself) will execute against the whole power of the Gentiles.

I would press again upon your attention that, after having destroyed the image, and not until then, the little stone became a great mountain, which filled the whole earth. We stated that the four following chapters (that is, to the end of chapter 6) gave the character and conduct of these empires; and that, instead of existing in dependence upon God, they are found in rebellion against Him, persecute His people, and exalt themselves against Him. The consequence is judgment.

In chapter 3 we observe the first and principal sin, namely, idolatry, as marking Gentile power, or the power which reigns during the times of the Gentiles. In the succeeding chapter, we observe that these empires, instead of being subject to God, become beasts, that is, they lose their proper understanding, and act as beasts —as wild beasts, who cease to be in subjection (all men, in their true place, acknowledging their subjection to God), and who lose their understanding. In chapter 5 there is open impiety; and in chapter 6 the head of the

empire exalts himself as God. Then follow details and circumstances of these empires, and their special relationship with the people of God.

The principles are given us in the first six chapters, and the details in the remaining six. The first thing which the civil power sets up is idolatry, with the object of establishing a religious unity, but always in separating the people from the true God, and in putting something in His place. This circumstance serves as an occasion for trying the faithfulness of God's people and the manner of it. Nebuchadnezzar commands the people, yea, even all the nations (for there were many under his dominion) to worship a statue. This is idolatry. (Consult Dan. 3:4-7 for the words of the proclamation.) This is not an unusual way with Satan; he excites in the civil power the desire of unity; and there is no more powerful motive for the mass than the influence of religion.62 Satan impels the civil powers to establish unity, in order that everything under their authority should be well ordered and regulated. It was thus with Nebuchadnezzar: he sets up this image in the province of Babylon, and demands the assent of all the governors to its reception and worship.

I repeat, that such a religious act is a powerful means of influencing the mass, and of holding them in submission, united in one community, and bound to the civil power, which is the centre of such religion, or at all events supports it, and is identified with it. But whenever this is the case, there must be persecution—it may be more or less violent—but persecution there will be. We see it in the present case. Nebuchadnezzar's alternative is, "Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

But there is yet another important consequence as characteristic of Gentile power; I mean impiety. Impiety not only refuses to respect the conscience, but, what is worse, disallows the rights of God. Respect for the conscience is necessary enough, but the rights of God are infinitely more so. Observe the words of the king: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" (v. 15). This is impiety—that principle of blasphemy which characterises the beast under all times and circumstances. His thought is of the power which he (the beast) possesses and holds. May we remember that it is God who has given it, and who overrules it! (Compare Hab. 1:11, 15-17.) Impiety, in forgetting the source of power, would arrogate to itself all its rights in spite of God Himself. Now, if unity be maintained, when God's own rights are set aside, it immediately becomes idolatry; for we fall into the hands of the enemy when we are at a distance from the true God. And when the civil power endeavours to establish this unity, it puts aside not only the rights of conscience, but the rights of God Himself. This applies in an especial manner to the word of God.

It is not only that man has a right to the word of God, as between him and his neighbour, but there is a more sacred right which is interfered with, if we deprive him of it: it is that God has the right to address what He will to the souls of men, and, having addressed the word to them, those who would deprive men of it, derogate from the rights and despise the authority of God, who has seen good to send it to them. Suppose that I have servants, dependents, to whom I send orders, evidently, if any one hinder the servants from receiving these orders, he interferes, not only with their rights, but with

mine; and this is the great question: God no doubt will make inquisition for all this. It is bad enough to violate the conscience of another man to satisfy one's own wickedness; but here Nebuchadnezzar entirely set aside the prerogative of the true God. And this is the principle of blasphemy which attaches to the Gentiles from the beginning. This was the first act of the head of gold; and such is the commencement of the power of the Gentiles as presented to us in this chapter.

On the other hand we have a touching picture in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They are not at all in alarm or disquietude. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter "(v. 16) is their answer to the king. Does this confidence issue in their escape from the threatened penalty? By no means; they do not escape. God allows them to be put to the proof; He does not manifest Himself beforehand, but permits Nebuchadnezzar to fulfil his threats. They are cast into the furnace of fire, as Daniel was afterwards into the den of lions. Whilst they would not obey the will of Nebuchadnezzar in violating their conscience, they offered no resistance to the persecution, but, as to their bodies, they submit entirely to his commands; and what is the consequence? They are loosed by the fire, and nothing is burnt but the chains with which the world had bound them; moreover, they have the Son of God as their companion in the furnace. The consequence of this interference of God in behalf of His poor servants was that a confession was forced from the civil power that their God was a God who delivered His people, and who condescended to attach His name to theirs. "Blessed," said the king, "be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his

servants that trusted in him." This is the position of a believer; he yields up his body to death, in order to serve none other than the true God. And more than this, dear friends, these men quit the furnace as witnesses to the power of God—their God—in the sight of all the world. It will be the same with the faithful Jews at the end; they will be in a furnace of fire, but, at the same time, God will manifest Himself as their God. Christians have a higher hope: even if we are left to suffer death, our hope is the hope of the glory of Him who has saved us, which we shall enjoy with Him in the place where He is. But as to the Jews, they will be delivered from death by the power of God, and the true God will be acknowledged as their God.

Chapter 4. The dream of the king concerning that great tree which overshadowed all the earth is related in this chapter. These are his words, "Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed.: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great," (v. 10). A great tree is always the symbol of a man of vast power on the earth: one tree in this instance sufficed, because, in fact, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over all the civilized or prophetic earth. There was, as it were, only one tree: "The beasts of the field had shelter under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof."

But what becomes of this delegated power? It is used as an occasion of self-exaltation. God had confided this power to Nebuchadnezzar; He had blessed the king beyond measure in temporal things. As a consequence pride takes possession of him, and that in spite of the warning given in the interpretation of the dream, and the express prediction of what was to come; for the

heart gets blinded by the things which it sees. Here then we have no longer unity in religious externals, and a deliverance by the hand of God, but another character of Gentile power. It is this—that if God, in His providence, elevate man, as a consequence man elevates himself. All is then lost. The case is this: the throne of God had been taken from the Jews, and God puts the Gentiles into the place of power in the person of Nebuchadnezzar; but man being guilty, and thus unable to observe any law, power cannot be committed to him without his lifting himself up against God who gave it. “Is not this great Babylon which I have built?” He makes himself the centre instead of God. He becomes a beast and loses his reason entirely. A beast may be powerful, large, stronger than man, shew much sagacity in his ways, but its look is downward; there is no exercise of conscience, and, as a consequence, no real relationship to God.

The only ennobling principle in man is submission—that is, submission to God; it supposes a capacity to understand the will of God. Man bows to this will, and does homage to God, as to One who is superior to himself. From the moment that he says “I have built,” he loses his moral relationship to God. All true elevation is lpst, and he becomes in this like one of the brute creation; for, I repeat it, a capacity to maintain a relationship with God is man’s true superiority; but in this God must be God, and man must be in submission. Whenever this connection is lost, we descend to objects below ourselves, to which our affections attach themselves. Nebuchadnezzar became the companion of beasts—he had lost his proper understanding. The effect of all this is given at the close of the chapter; for when he finds himself out, he uses such language as is ever

heard in such a case. “At the same time, my reason returned unto me,” etc. (v. 36, 37). Behold the effect of God’s judgments upon Gentile power. It is now no longer His interposition in behalf of a poor remnant of His people, as in the case of Shadrach, etc., but He brings down the pride of earthly power. Man exalts himself against God, but exactly where his greatest strength is put forth, the Lord is above him; Ex. 18:11. The great principle then of chapter 4 is the evil conduct of Gentile power. It exalts itself against God, becomes brutish in its understanding, and is judged.63 Seven times pass over it, and at last it confesses God. In other words, the sovereign power of the Gentiles is deprived of all real understanding during the entire period of its imperial existence, after which it confesses God.

Chapter 5. In this chapter we have further detail. King Belshazzar makes a feast, and commands “to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein” (v. 2). Here is a fresh aspect of Gentile failure. It is a thorough impiety, and provokes the immediate destruction of the Babylonian power. This third form of impiety is still in connection with the Jews; for God, in relation to them, is always the God of the earth who is seen exercising a government below. It is not a question of the heavenly hopes of the church. God has delivered the Jews as captives into Gentile hands; He has delivered His altar, His sanctuary (Lam. 2:7), all the exterior signs of His presence and glory, into the hands of the Gentiles.

The head of the Gentiles vaunts himself, and, because God has thus delivered up the Jews, he glorifies his false gods, exalts them, and dishonours God. It will be the

same with the king of Babylon at the end—open blasphemy. It will not be the principle of idolatry only, neither will it be alone that pride of heart which says “I have built.” These things will assuredly characterise him, for he is man; but it will be an immediate outrageous act which will dishonour the true God—that God who delivers His people into the hands of the wicked for their chastisement. It will be an act against the God of the Jews. The instant he does this, “there came forth fingers of a man’s hand and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall “these words, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin”: the king seeing the part of the hand which wrote, and his countenance being changed … then Daniel answered and said before the king… O thou king, the most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour … And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee,” etc. Judgment falls on Belshazzar, and his kingdom is destroyed. Verse 30: “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom.”

Chapter 6. In this chapter we find the fourth principle of evil which existed among the Gentiles, and which completes the whole. It is not only an impiety which dishonours God, but it is man who exalts himself; he puts himself in the place of God Himself. The satraps go to the king and say (v. 6, 7) “King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, etc., have consulted together, to establish a

royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever," etc.

It is proposed, in short, that no one should be confessed as God, and no request made to any but to Darius himself. It will be thus with the wicked one, "who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," 2 Thess. 2:4. Again, it is said of him, Daniel 11:36, 37, "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all."

It is then that he is destroyed. This is the utmost limit of wickedness, an exalting of himself against God, a desire to supplant Him on the earth. Notwithstanding, in every case, where the faithful have been put to the proof (whether by Nebuchadnezzar or Darius) the result has been the humiliation of the power of the Gentiles, which, having beforetime opposed, now confesses God.

It is thus with Darius, "I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end" (v. 26). There is a difference of expression to be noticed here. The confession of Nebuchadnezzar is to this effect, that the God of heaven is the God of the Jews; that is, of Shadrach, etc., and that no god can deliver

like Him. Here also we have the God of Daniel, and, therefore, of the Jews; but He is also “the living God, and stedfast for ever; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end”: all of which will be ushered in at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the establishment of His kingdom, which will have no end.

Again, Darius says “he delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” It is the deliverance of the Jews, that is, of a remnant, which is the public manifestation on the earth, and which gives occasion to the confession of the Gentiles, that God is the true God. They will say, as Jethro said to Moses, “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods,” Ex. 18:11.

The true God is, then, acknowledged by the judgments which He executes on those who exalt themselves against Him, and by the deliverance of His people the Jews. The first of these judgments, for it is one, is that the chief of the Gentiles loses all understanding as to the ways of God; and the second is the entire destruction of this king of Babylon, on the very night in which he dishonours God. This Gentile history is sad, though glorious in its result by the manifestation of God for His people. In chapter 3 we see idolatry—the establishment of unity in idolatry by the arm of the civil power, which is mistress to all appearance, whilst really it is the slave of Satan. Chapter 4 is the history of man’s exaltation of himself. Chapter 5 is open impiety against the Eternal; and finally, chapter 6 is the head of the Gentiles putting himself in the place of God.

In all these cases we find the people of God entirely submissive to the temporal power of these kings; for their power came from God. This is the principle of a Christian; he submits. The use which these established powers make of the authority which God has given them does not alter the source of the power. Jesus acknowledged that the power of Pontius Pilate, by which that governor condemned Him, came from God: when His hour was come, He submitted Himself to that which the authority, ordained of God, commanded. It is evident, from the use which the Gentiles make of their power in turning it against God, that they are under the direction of Satan; while holding their power from the one, they make use of it for the other.

What course does the child of God pursue? He does not maintain himself by leaning upon the civil power; he acts according to his conscience, and seeks only the will of God; at the same time he submits, and in so doing yields up his body; for his conscience is submissive to no one but the Lord: he cannot serve two masters. Shadrach and his friends undergo their punishment, but they refuse to do what the king, in the exercise of his power, wishes them to do. They do not seek to turn away the king from his plans; they are threatened and punished by Nebuchadnezzar, but they are faithful to their God, and He delivers them. They leave their case with Him. “He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods,” chap. 3:17, 18. There is yet another remark; it is, that even when man is unfaithful (as were the Jews), God never loses his rights. He may confer power on the Gentiles for a time, but He never loses His rights, and, as a consequence, He never abandons His

people; as He said unto Pharaoh, “Let my people go.” The people of Israel were a subject of controversy between Pharaoh and God. Christians have other hopes, but the principle is always true. Daniel, who had faith, spoke as faith always does; for it sees as God sees. It is true that God had said, “It is no longer my people”; but Daniel speaks always of Israel as the people of God, because faith confesses all the rights of God. If a Jew had faith in the heart, God recognised him in spite of his circumstances; and this is very precious.

It is impossible, in spite of all Satan can do in the church of God, that he could put us into a position where God cannot recognise faith: otherwise God would lose His rights. In the ensuing lecture it will be needful to enter into details. An acquaintance with the leading features of Gentile power, from Nebuchadnezzar to the end, is of the utmost importance for understanding the things of God. For although we, as Christians, have another hope, even a heavenly one, yet we are in the times of the Gentiles; and the nearer we approach the end, the more Israel will come into prominence, and it is easy to see, by their present condition, that events are leading rapidly to a termination; and the more Israel becomes important, the more it behoves us to understand the thoughts of God concerning that people.

We have seen now in its general traits the history of the Gentile power from Nebuchadnezzar (that is from the ruin of Jerusalem) till the time the Lord shall come and destroy the impious and apostate power; for what we have read shews us the establishment of the kingdom of God on the ruins of the folly and impiety of man. In the next lecture, dear friends, we shall have nothing more of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, etc., but we shall be

occupied with the revelations made to Daniel himself. It is he who represented the faithful remnant of the Jews, and it is he who interprets that which others received and to whom are confided the details of those things which relate to the people of God.

There is yet another remark to make before concluding this preface: it is, that these communications from God should have the effect of separating us entirely from this world, by making us understand that, as to this world, God sees none else, so to speak, than Jews or these apostate Gentiles. I am not speaking of Christians (He sees them after another manner), but of external power. When it is a question of Christians, then the circumstances are beyond this world. Jesus Christ says, “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” It should be thus in the purposes of daily Christian activity into which the energy of love leads us. As to those within, we train each other, not for Jewish hopes, but for the place which Jesus occupies, and for those mansions in His Father’s house which He went to prepare for us. As for our hope, the end which we propose to ourselves, until God shall execute His judgments, it is not a hope that the world can be improved; for we see from the word that, until this judgment falls, the course of the world runs on in impiety and exaltation of man, which very wickedness brings down the judgment of God.

Such is the world in which we live, according to God’s description of it; but He has revealed to us also the things of heaven. He has revealed to us Him whom the world rejected, and who is gone into heaven, so that we have an object and motives which ought to govern us entirely and direct our walk; in order that, by these

motives presented to the heart, and with which the new man occupies himself, we should live and walk by the Spirit in a world to ourselves— “the world to come, whereof we speak”: whilst, on the other hand, by the warnings which God has given us here, by the details with which He has furnished us, He would detach us, and that with an enlightened mind, from the world in which we sojourn as pilgrims and strangers. It is sad with what ease the world attaches itself to our hearts. I do not say that our hearts attach themselves to the world now, although that may follow soon as a consequence, but that the world attaches itself to our hearts.

Dear friends, if a man is covetous, this is the world. If a man is over diligent in affairs, he is occupied with the world, he lives in it, so to speak. It is extremely difficult for us to keep clear of the general principles of the world. It varies in its forms: in one, it is avarice; in another, it is a good position in society; in another, it is an active mind, which engages itself in politics. But this world below, dear friends, is not our world; we have another, of which Christ will be the chief, the centre, and the joy— “the world to come, whereof we speak,” says the apostle. And may God grant that in all the details of life, in our everyday circumstances, this separation may be realised and manifested, and that we may be able to say, “Our life is hid with Christ in God.” The treasure, the life, and the joy of all those souls who have understood what happiness it is to be with Him, is there where He is.

Lecture 3 Chapter 7

In this second part of the book we have no longer the interpretation of dreams made to Nebuchadnezzar, etc., but the communications made to Daniel himself. You remember also, that the subject of which the book of Daniel treats is the Jews. God's ancient people were in captivity, and had been replaced, as to the throne of the world (at least as to the rights of this throne), by the Gentiles. God had had until lately His throne at Jerusalem. He was now no longer there, as He had once been literally there. Before the captivity God had placed His glory in the temple. He exercised the functions of government, punishing the wicked at times by instant judgments. He was in immediate relationship with the people. It was a pure theocracy, though connected with the monarchy of the house of David at the close; but all that was entirely gone. The Jews, instead of conducting themselves as those under the government of God ought to do, had become thoroughly unfaithful; they had made their children pass through the fire to Moloch, and had worshipped idols. The consequence of such conduct was, that God could no longer identify Himself with the nation. He rejected them, took away His throne from Jerusalem, and confided the dominion and empire of the world to the Gentiles. (See chap. 2:38.) Upon this Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem, and the times of the Gentiles begin.

There are two aspects to this part of the subject: on one side, the responsibility of the Gentiles, and on the other, the circumstances of the Jews in those times, and in particular of the faithful remnant—the special object of God's care. We have already seen the general characters of the Gentile kings.

But now we come to more intimate details of these beasts in their relationship with the Jewish people, and with the remnant who had their expectation from God. These beasts, as we have seen, had lost their knowledge of God, and, had persecuted His people; and thus, in order to bring out more perfectly the circumstances of the Jews, we are given a more minute history of some of these beasts, together with some account of the remnant under their power, and also many circumstances, as we shall presently see, which will have their accomplishment in the holy people.

We must note a feature in this book, as also in the prophetic part of the Apocalypse, that there is nothing addressed to the people of God. In the other prophets, for instance Isaiah and Jeremiah, there are many particulars concerning these same things, but the prophet always addressed the people of God, because they were still acknowledged. But when this is no longer the case, God may give to a prophet, to Daniel, to a remnant, revelations having reference to the people; but the prophet no longer addresses himself to the people. Thus Daniel is full of joy at these communications, but he does not say a word of them to the Jews directly. God was with the remnant, even Daniel.64 He had nothing more to do with His people in the government of the world, but He had a remnant, and He communicated to the faithful whom He had chosen His intention concerning this remnant, and the events which were to take place. It is thus in the Apocalypse in its prophetic part. Certain things are told to John: it is not John speaking to Christians.

Such prophecies are a kind of depot of certain truths, which is for the blessing of the church at all times, and

for the Jews whenever they believe. As to the people of God not being acknowledged, I believe this ought to have its weight in studying the Apocalypse, and you will do well to consider it. We are now going to enter into the second part of the book, wherein the conduct of the beasts and of the different powers of the Gentiles is given in detail; as well as the circumstances of the saints during their (the Gentile) dominion, and the judgment of God which comes down at the end.

Chapter 7 is an introduction, and contains three visions. There is the first general fact that there would be these four beasts, but the fourth was of the most importance; for although the others had been wicked enough, whether in acting against God or His people, it was under the fourth that the open revolt was to take place, whether of Jews or of Christianity, against God—a revolt which should result in the entire destruction of the beast, because of its lifting itself up against the authority and glory of God.

The first vision gives the description, however, only of the three earlier beasts, whose dominion was successively taken away from them, but whose lives were prolonged; that is, they were not entirely destroyed. The second vision (v. 7) is the circumstantial history of the fourth beast previously mentioned. The third vision (v. 13) is the opposition of all this, viz., the dominion given to the Son of man. The explanation follows.

First vision. “Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea “(v. 2). The great sea, in prophetic language, constantly signifies masses of people; thus

Babylon (Rev. 17:1, 15; Jer. 51) is described as dwelling (v. 13) “upon many waters”; that is, people not yet at the time of the vision formed into kingdoms, empires, and as such acknowledged by God as prophetic objects. These last are rather called the earth.

“And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another” (v. 3). You will find the distinction between the sea and the earth in Revelation 13, where the first beast comes out of the sea, whereas the second comes from the earth, because the first beast was the empire which arose amidst the confusion of nations, whilst the second beast appears when the first was already upon the earth and his empire established.

“The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it” (v. 4). This was the Babylonish monarchy, the first, which carried everything before it. Pharaoh desired to do so, but his fate was sealed at Carchemish near the Euphrates; Jer. 46. This lion with wings was Nebuchadnezzar; his empire had lasted only seventy years. Darius the Mede took the kingdom, and Babylon remained a great city after its dominion was taken away. There was a subsequent judgment upon it, for it was besieged and taken a second time, and then it stood upon its feet as a man, submissive, and no more ravaging the nations; it became a province, and was no longer mistress of the world.

Second beast. “And behold, another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it: and

they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh" (v. 5). This is the Persian empire. I will not discuss this, because all who have studied the prophecies are agreed about it.

Third beast. "After this, I beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it" (v. 6). This is without doubt the empire of Alexander. The beast is described, more under the features which it took after the death of that prince, when his empire was divided into four parts, than under those which it had when united under his power. This is important, because in fact two of the parts into which it was divided have had much more to do with the Jews, than the empire had in the time of Alexander himself. Two of these are afterwards called (chap. 11) the king of the north and the king of the south.

Daniel said in a general manner that there were four beasts, but the fourth is reserved for a special vision. "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it; and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns" (v. 7). That which particularly marks this beast was that it had ten horns (ten kings). "I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things" (v. 8).

This description is not simply that of a power hurried into action under the influence of his passions, nor of a conqueror who goes about ravaging everywhere; but there was something more in the ways of this little horn, viz., exceeding arrogance, intelligence, design, counsel, reflection, etc.—he had eyes as the eyes of a man. It is said of the Lamb, in the Apocalypse, that it had seven eyes—an expression for the perfection of foresight and understanding. Here it is not perfection, but at least intelligence, reflection, and design: all these are represented by the eyes; "and a mouth speaking great things," namely, prodigious boasting; and this characterises particularly this horn. It is on account of the words which this horn spake that the beast was destroyed. He is the one who causes-the judgment of the fourth beast. The little horn is he who morally influences the beast. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down (placed),65 and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool … the judgment was set and the books were opened" (v. 9).

This is an assize. The thrones are not overthrown, but placed. The Ancient of days sits in judgment; myriads of myriads are there before Him. The books are opened. But as yet the Son of man does not appear, but only the Ancient of days. In another sense Christ is Himself the Ancient of days, but here, a little farther on in the chapter, He is presented to Him (the Ancient of days) as the Son of man.

In the Apocalypse, when John sees (chap. 1) the Son of man, it is with all the attributes of the Ancient of days. But here the Ancient of days is seen Himself apart in vision, because Christ, in this book, is always considered

as the Messiah, or as the Son of man, in His own separate and proper character as such, as the Anointed One (and thus also as man), because it was under this character that He was known to the Jews, or as inheriting the rights of man on the part of God in this world.

Herein we have the distinction in the expressions Messiah and Son of man, and this difference may be particularly traced in the gospel by Matthew. In His quality of the Anointed One, He appeared as king down here. When He came thus as Messiah, He was rejected: the Messiah, we are told, was cut off, and had nothing; Dan. 9:26 (margin). But when God at a future period shall set up His throne (we are not speaking of His heavenly glory, for that is already accomplished), it will not be only as the Messiah. It is not the way of God to re-establish that which has been spoiled. Such a procedure would be unworthy of God: if Satan spoils God's work, He is not satisfied with simply mending it. Whenever the folly of man and the malice of Satan have perverted any passing blessing which God has given to man, God establishes something infinitely superior. We have a striking instance of this in Jesus Christ Himself. Man was placed in innocence upon the earth. This state of things was soon altered by the folly of man tempted by the devil. Does God re-establish again an innocent man on the earth? No. He sets up His own Son, a glorified man in heaven and earth. Thus God, in allowing the things which He has presented or confided to man to be corrupted, afterwards Himself establishes something infinitely superior according to His own purpose.

In this manner the Messiah was offered as king of the Jews. Faith, indeed, confessed Him as the Son of God;

but as the Son of David, if He had been received, He would have possessed the throne of David. Man, being a sinner, would not receive Him; but when He returns, it will not be as Messiah, or as the Son of David only. He is gone to receive a kingdom from the hands of His Father, an inheritance over all things, not only as Messiah, but as the Son of man; for God has decreed, that “all things shall be subdued unto him,” 1 Cor. 15. It is for this reason that He is seen coming with the clouds of heaven as Son of man.

When Christ presented Himself to the Jews as Messiah, and even to the Gentiles under Pontius Pilate, He was rejected; after which God does not establish Him as Messiah alone, but as Heir of all things. Is this done by the will of man? By no means. Christ has been presented to the good-will of man, but He was received with hatred and disdain. They crucified Him. He will be established by the decree of God.

Now when this little horn speaks great things—when all its insolent pride is manifested—when it has come to its height, then the thrones are placed, and God begins to exercise His power. When power, as confided to man, is turned into rebellion against God, it is time for God to act, and for the thrones of judgment to be placed, for the books to be opened, and for man to give account to God.

The result of this judgment on the part of the Ancient of days is to give the kingdom to the Son of man. It is a question here of this power—these rights of the Ancient of days. It is the demonstration that He who had possessed the rights from the beginning to the end, although He had been concealed, was He who gave the power to the one and to the other.

God had been hidden, so to speak, during the time of the other beasts, nevertheless His providence acted. The Babylonians were replaced by the Persians, and these last by the Greeks. All this was done, as things are done even now, by the arrangement of that providence which governs the world, because the Ancient of days (whose rights, notwithstanding, cannot be annihilated) was not yet sitting to execute judgment on account of the acts which had been committed against Him. But it will not be thus at the end. As yet the open revolt had not taken place. The fourth beast had not yet said, Isaiah 47:8, “I am, and none else beside me.” Compare what is said to the prince of Tyre, “Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God?” (Ezek. 28:9). The judgment of this fourth beast will be as against man in a state of open rebellion against God.

Now the attention of Daniel (v. 11) is entirely taken up with the little horn. “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.” He is amazed to hear there, in the very presence of God, this horn speaking blasphemous things. He wondered that God should permit it; but he saw the beast slain. This was the result. Then he says, “As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time “; that is, after the dominion had been taken from Babylon, it continued to subsist for some time, as did the Persian likewise; but the destruction of the fourth beast shall be entire. To the others a prolongation of life had been granted after the fall of the empire; but here the judgment and the destruction go together.

Consequent upon all this is a third vision (v. 13, 14). It is the Son of man presented to the Ancient of days. “Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.” “And there was given him dominion, and glory … that all people … should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion,” etc., etc. (v. 14). This is the kingdom which will be confided to Him, and which He will administer for the subjection of all things to God Himself.

Now we come to the explanation given to the prophet (v. 15-17). “The visions of my head,” says Daniel, “troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me,” etc. “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” But he adds a fact not before mentioned: “The saints of the most high shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever” (v. 18). It is not alone the history of something which takes place by the interposition of providence, or by the judgment of God; but the interpretation is occupied with the people of God—the saints of the most high. We always find, whether in prophecy or in parable, that the explanation goes beyond that which the original statement itself contains. There is always some new fact. So here, the truth is added, that the saints of the most High are to obtain and to keep the kingdom. The general thesis of the chapter is, that four great beasts would rise on the earth, and be finally judged by God. The truth added in the explanation is, that the saints of the most High would receive the kingdom, the beasts being set aside.

“Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast … which brake in pieces and stamped the residue with his feet” (v. 19). This violence and cruelty has always marked the conduct of the fourth beast; it is Europe, at all events, in the west. “And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up … even of that horn that had eyes. …” (v. 20). The horn had intelligence and designs. Three of the horns (kingdoms) fell before this horn, which, little at the beginning, becomes in appearance more stout than his fellows, and, at last, rules in the midst of the horns. And you will see, as we proceed, that this horn usurps all the power of the beast, or, at least, stamps the whole with its character. The horn gets the power. As it is the conduct of this little horn, which determines that of the beast, so also is the horn the cause of the beast’s destruction.

“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them” … (v. 21) “until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (v. 22). Afterwards the explanation is given, verses 23-25, and the little horn is more fully mentioned. This horn is not to be an ordinary kingdom, but a special power which raises itself up in the midst of the others.

The fourth beast is to do three things: first, it speaks great things against the God who is on high, ruler of heaven and earth; secondly, it wears out the saints of the most High (those, namely, who own God in the high or heavenly places); also it makes war with the faithful Jews who have returned to their land. Thirdly, it not only destroys the saints, but it thinks to change the times (that is, solemn days—certain days which return from

year to year, and which mark certain epochs among the Jews, as Pentecost, the feast of Tabernacles, etc.), and the law itself.

They shall be delivered into his hands, that is, these times and laws, until a certain period; it will not be for ever. The beast, then, apostatises against God, makes war against the saints who confess Him, and, lastly, completely sets aside the Jewish ordinances. This is the final character which the beast takes.

We shall still have to consider this beast, and, consequently, we must follow with care this part of the book, because of the important place which the little horn occupies in the revelations of God. Meanwhile let us remember that, whilst the prophetic part of this chapter, as contrasted with the explanatory part, treats of the beast being destroyed and delivered to the fire; in the latter part, the Spirit of God is almost entirely occupied with the actings of this little horn. The judgment is to sit, and the dominion to be taken away (that is, of the little horn), verse 26. We shall see that the ten horns give their power to the beast; but this little horn rules the beast, morally speaking, and so all the others, by its intelligence and influence. Thus the Spirit of God can speak of the little horn as being everything.

Notwithstanding it was still the beast, for the little horn possessed all the power of the beast, and its (the little horn's) conduct characterised the beast; for as it was the horn which blasphemed, persecuted, and changed the law, so it is its dominion which is taken away.

At the same time bear in mind that, although the little horn was principally before the eyes of the prophet, the others had not ceased to exist. There yet remained

seven horns after three had been swallowed up, so that we do not see, in the little horn, all the empire of the fourth beast, considered geographically. The little horn is morally, but not geographically, the beast. Seven of the horns which existed previously will still subsist. The features of the beast, then, are, that we have one particular horn which is very different from the others, small in appearance when it rose, but whose looks and words were stouter than the others', three of whom fell before it. It is this horn that persecutes and changes the times, and represents completely the beast before God as to the judgment; but at the same time, as to physical and material power, there are seven other horns in other places, but within the limits of the Roman empire; and who are thus the instruments of the moral evil of the little horn. One horn is the great worker of evil, whilst the mass of the empire, divided into seven parts, gives the power to that one.

Napoleon may serve to give us an idea of this state of things. Spain, Belgium, Westphalia, etc., followed him, they were his auxiliaries; but he personally stamped his character on the whole course of events. And so with these seven: their authority may exist within their own limits, but their power will be given to him, who will exalt himself against God and His saints.

Revelation 13 and 17, also bring this beast before us. In chapter 13 he is shewn as seated upon the throne, and wielding the power of Satan, by means of another beast who helped to glorify the first on the throne. In chapter 17 he is shewn more in his relationships with Babylon; whilst here in Daniel 7 he is represented to us as making war against God Himself, in his relationship also with the saints of the most High, and with the Jews. In Daniel

11:36-39, where we have again this king, or little horn, we learn more particularly his actings in the east—in the Jewish or glorious land. It is the special place where the evil works. In Zechariah 11 we have details of an idol shepherd, who shall be found in Judea and shall oppress the people, and who, I think, is the same as the second beast of Revelation 13, which I shall not now examine.

In 2 Thessalonians 2 he is seen in quite another aspect (viz., in connection with apostate Christendom); just as in Daniel 11:36 he is considered with respect to his evil conduct as king in Palestine; whilst here, he is seen rising from among the Gentiles, acting against the saints of the most High, and the faithful Jews. I do not make any allusion in this place to chapter 8 because it is my conviction that the little horn of that chapter is not the same as this one. Some who have studied the subject are not of this opinion, but for myself, it is my belief that it is another power which will be found there, in special connection with the Jews, invading those eastern countries, but which is not the little horn of chapter 7.

There is still another passage to be referred to in regard to this little horn. It is the latter part of Daniel 9 in connection with the desolation of Jerusalem. I mention it only that the chain of passages may be complete. In examining this book, I have no pretension to give a complete exposition, but only to notice some leading points which may assist you, and myself also, in further inquiry. One of the most remarkable facts in this chapter is the open revolt of man against God; it is that which so astonished Daniel. In the end man will arrogate to himself power, as if it were found in himself, instead of derived from God, just as it was the religion of man

among the Jews which dared to reject and crucify the Messiah.

But this power of man, complete in apostasy, given up to Satan, is the instrument of the war which Satan wages against God and His Anointed. It is not iniquity alone, and the commission of sin, but the open revolt of sin as a principle. Under whatever form man is found in connection with God, this beast will give himself the trouble, so to speak, to unite in himself all these characters in opposition to God. Is it a question of God Himself? he derides Him and sets himself up against Him. Is it a question of the saints? he persecutes and destroys them. His object is to overturn everything for the setting up of himself. It is the king who does according to his own will. Satan gives him his throne after he has been driven out of heaven, three years and a half before the judgment: when, having but a short time, he acts in great wrath, establishing thus the wicked one upon his throne on earth, inspiring man, and putting him forward, as the head of everything here below, and destroying all relationship with God. Thus in 2 Thessalonians 2 we find that the rebellion against God, as known in Christianity, is based upon the apostasy; and then the man of sin rises and shews himself as God in the temple of God (all those who have not received the truth in the love of it having been deceived by the lying wonders of the power of the enemy).

Then the events of Revelation 13 will be realised; that Satan gives his throne to the beast, and at that time, I judge, the horrible character of open revolt in all its bearings will be publicly manifested. The evil works beforehand in principles, in mysteries; but when the throne of Satan is set up down here, after he has been

driven from heaven (at least three years and a half before the end), and in consequence, is no longer able to deceive, after a religious sort, in making himself god on high; and the saints, as a result, having no combat to sustain in the heavenly places, then he gives his throne to the beast; and open rebellion will follow—rebellion against God; for the beast becomes the wicked one in speciality: “that wicked one shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy.” Then the throne will be given to the Son of man.

It is very important, through God’s grace, to see where the course of this world will end; and be assured that it is not necessary that man should be outwardly degraded in habits in order to serve Satan, or that these events should take place; for the little horn had the eyes of a man, all the intelligence of man, his capacity, and clear-sightedness. These faculties distinguish him. Nevertheless, he will reject God; his conscience will not be in exercise; he will have no sense of his responsibility towards Him; whilst the desire of self-elevation and aggrandisement will choke every trace of love: just as Adam, who wished to be as God, and put God aside. But the judgment will come in, and Christ will be manifested in all His glory, and it is this for which we wait, as regards the improvement of things here below. But, thanks be to God, we have, as Christians, a better portion, even a heavenly, which consists in being like Christ and with Him for ever.

Lecture 4 Chapter 8

I reserve some further remarks on chapter 7 till we come to the end of chapter 9 and I proceed to chapter 8. In it the Spirit of God takes two empires, namely, the

second and third of the four beasts previously seen, to give a more detailed history of them.

“In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me” (v. 1). “And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan, in the palace, which is in the province of Elam” (v. 2). This land of Elam, or Persia, was the body of the second beast. The bear of chapter 7 is now the ram. “The ram which thou sawest, having two horns, are the kings of Media and Persia” (v. 20). These two kingdoms were united into one. In chapter 7 this kingdom is told to “arise and devour much flesh,” whilst here the ram is said “to push westward, and northward, and southward.” The he-goat of verse 5, who attacks the ram, is the empire. of the Greeks, which commenced under Alexander. This “notable horn,” having united the Greeks, led them into Asia against the empire of the Persians. In three years he overthrew it: it crumbled into nothing before his energy, which earned for him, among men, the name of Great. We know from history, that he died, whilst yet young, of a fever, the consequence of his excesses.

“When he [the he-goat] was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven” (v. 8). Alexander traversed the greater part of Asia, and penetrated as far as India, proving his capacity not only as a general, but as the founder of a solid empire. But God laid His hand upon him, and “for it came up four notable ones.” The same truth is presented, chapter 7:6, under the figure of a leopard with four wings and four heads. After Alexander’s death his kingdom was divided into four distinct monarchies, with two of which we have principally to do, because two of them came into

connection with the Jews; just as lately the Turks and Egyptians were at war about this same Holy Land.

We must remember, if we would understand this prophecy, that even the geography of Scripture is always considered according to the position of the Holy Land. If we have a king of the south, it is a king to the south of Palestine; for Palestine is the centre of all God's thoughts as to the government of this world. Jerusalem is His chosen city. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion," it is said, "He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever," Psalm 132:13, 14. From one of the kingdoms designed under the four horns (it is not said from which, but distinctively from one) comes a little horn, whose acts form the important part of this chapter.

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land" (v. 9), viz., the Holy Land. In considering Scripture, it is needful to place oneself, so to speak, in the point of view from which God looks. He says, in Deuteronomy 11:12, and 1 Kings 9:3, that He will never take His eyes off Palestine. Now the activity of faith always hangs upon this point of view of God. And this knowledge of God's thoughts is the power of service in the church. God keeps His sheep always; that is to say, He always loves them. If I see one of these sheep wander, it is very sorrowful; and looking at it with man's judgment only, one might be inclined to abandon it; but remembering that it is a sheep, I act towards it as God thinks of it: that is, faith takes up the thoughts of God as to the objects of His love.

As far as the world is concerned, Jerusalem is nothing; it is a city trodden down, with neither commerce nor

riches nor aught else. Superstition is established there on the sepulchre of the Lord. It is true, indeed, that the kings of the earth are beginning to look that way, because providence is leading in that direction; but as for God, He ever thinks of it; it is always His house, His city. His eyes and His heart are there continually. Now faith understands this.

And what was Daniel's position? He was a captive among the Chaldeans at Babylon; but Palestine was for him the pleasant land. His captivity takes off nothing from its interest. It was a very small province of an immense empire, almost unknown in the empire, so small was it in comparison. But to God it was everything. His purposes were ever towards it.

"The little horn waxed exceeding great towards … the pleasant land." We shall never understand the Old Testament prophecies, if we do not see two things. First, the thoughts of God are upon the glory of Christ, who, on His re-appearance, will reign over the earth. If this thought be not kept in view, whilst considering the details and events of Scripture, nothing will be understood: for God will and does make all the events of the world work together to that end. Secondly, we shall equally fail in understanding prophecy if we forget that the Jews are the habitual object of the thoughts of God; for, although He cannot recognise them for the moment, as being under His chastening hand, they are nevertheless still His people; for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29); and, however we may apply this assertion to the church—for it is true of every one who is possessor of divine life—yet the context shews that the Jews are meant, who, although supplanted during their judicial blindness by

the church66 on earth (the Gentile dispensation), yet will by and by be re-established in all their privileges.

When we have once laid hold on these two thoughts—that Christ is the aim and end of all the counsels of God, and that the Jews are the object of His counsels here below—there are a multitude of expressions that become easy of apprehension. For example, “the pleasant land” is the land of the Jews: nothing ennobles before God but His gifts and vocation. And who are the people and land which He has chosen? No other than the land and the people which He promised to Abraham (Gen. 15), and which Christ, as the Seed of Abraham, will inherit, together with Israel, who are the people whom God has chosen.

“And it [the little horn] waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them” (v. 10). There is an alteration in the next verse, to which I must here draw your attention, as it relates to a matter of no little importance, viz., the complete destruction of the worship of God at Jerusalem. If we were meditating on doctrines connected with salvation, I would not trouble you with questions of criticism; but I venture to do so here, as we are occupied with the intelligence of Scripture, and much is, in this instance, dependent on a just translation of verse 11, the main correction of which is afforded by the margin of the English translation. I give what I believe to be correct. “And he67 magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and from him (the prince of the host) the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place68 of his sanctuary was cast down, and a certain time69 of distress was appointed to the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression.” All this I should,

moreover, put in parenthesis. The material change is that the taking away the daily sacrifice is not attributed to this little horn. The actings of the little horn are resumed after the word “transgression.” “And it cast down the truth to the ground,” etc.

In the actings, then, of the little horn it is not a question of uttering blasphemy and exalting itself against God, but of something very definite and precise: “it waxed great even to the host of heaven.” It attacks those who, in those days, are there—the Jews who have a place around their chief (that is, those who in the moral heaven surround the throne of God); I judge it to mean the priests and heads among the Jews at Jerusalem, or such as God owns there. Observe God’s estimate of things. He attaches more importance to the priests and governors among this poor people, than to anything else which the beast has been doing in the world. He lifted himself up “even to the host of heaven.” It is infinitely more dangerous to meddle with things that belong to God, and things upon which God looks—to endeavour to efface His glory, all tarnished though it may be in our hands, than to overturn or to found empires, or to achieve the greatest victories (although God in His providence may superintend these events). The little horn might overthrow nations; but to say there should be no worship of God was an event far more serious: it was to destroy the only link which made it possible for God to recognise the state of things on the earth.

Such, then, is the special conduct of this little horn. It magnifies itself even to the host of heaven, and casts down a part of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamps on them. At the end, he who fills the antitypical place of this little horn exalts himself even so

as to rise up against the prince of the host. He aims even at Him who is the true head of all things. Those who were at Jerusalem in such a place represented God, whilst Christ will soon be manifested as the true prince of the host. God further permits that the daily sacrifice should be taken away from this prince. We see therefore who is this Prince. It is the Lord. The sacrifice is taken away from Him, and the place of His sanctuary cast down, in this time of terror.

God calls His house at Jerusalem the place of His sanctuary, the sanctuary of Christ. He was and is always the God of the Jews. It is not a simple treading down of the people by the permission of God, as chastisement on account of their sins; but that it should be so, the temple is allowed to be cast down, as indeed it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon; and this must be the case, in order that God may shew that He has completely abandoned His people to the fruit of their ways. While He owns His honour there, He must stand up in their defence, though He chastise; but if that be destroyed, and their city prostrate, then He leaves them indeed to the matured fruit of their sins, though He may still have the intention of bringing them back.

One might have supposed it impossible that His fixed habitation should be cast down; but the Spirit of God puts these facts in contrast, that we may see that the things which God Himself had established and preserved for centuries, He abandons, whilst still calling them His own. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” But He overturns everything that He has set as a witness, in the place which He has chosen for His dwelling, and breaks His bonds with the people, whilst still saying (Lam. 2:6, 7), that they are His

tabernacle, His place of assembly, His altar, and His sanctuary. Because of the unfaithfulness of the people, God no longer allows the worship which should have been offered to Him, and by permitting the daily sacrifice to be taken away, the visible and exterior link between Himself and the people is broken, and all that manifests His favour in the world—His house and worship—is set aside.

Verse 13. “Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said to that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” The question is about the length of the time of affliction. The thoughts of the inquirer are not upon the exploits of the little horn, but about the desolation of the Jewish worship and temple. This distinction is important. I do not say that such desolations do not announce the last days; only these two things are distinct, viz., the conduct of the little horn, and the desolation of the temple. In the explanation given in the course of the chapter concerning the end of the indignation, there is nothing on the subject of worship; it refers only to circumstances concerning the king of fierce countenance, understanding dark sentences, without speaking of the temple. And lastly, there is not a word said that it is this little horn who takes away the daily sacrifice.

This answer precedes and is distinct from the interpretation given to Daniel of the little horn. It is possible that in the history, the little horn may have done all these things (allowing Antiochus Epiphanes to have been the type), but the Holy Spirit does not use them

all70 when He speaks of what is to fill up the picture of the end.

Verse 14. “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” We shall be helped in the consideration of these verses by recurring to verse 10. “It waxed great … it cast down some of the host … and stamped upon them”; and in verse 12 we again find the expression, “It cast down the truth to the ground.” Now between these two expressions all is in parenthesis, that is, the whole of verse 11 and a part of verse 12. “It cast down the truth to the ground “is the conduct of this horn in the last days, of which we have an explanation at the end. “So he [Gabriel] came near where I stood” (v. 17). “And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be” (v. 19). The word “indignation” is often found in the prophecies, and is particularly mentioned in Isaiah 10. Iniquity had ripened, and its chastisement had begun in the days of the faithless successor of David, Ahaz. It went on increasing. The Jews would not repent, and the hand of the Lord was heavier upon them; and will continue (see Isaiah 10:5, 8, then 12, 17, 21, 25) until the people shall return to Him who smote them.

It began comparatively lightly with the attacks of the Syrians, and the loss of the provinces; to these succeeded the conquests of the Babylonians; after that, the captivity; but the Jews would not repent at these judgments. Afterwards God sent them His Son; you know how they treated Him. When they shall be again in their land, they will give themselves over to idolatry, and will receive Antichrist instead of Christ. At last, the abomination of desolation will be set up, until Christ

Himself shall destroy the enemies of the people, and then the indignation will be accomplished. This time of indignation consists in the people being abandoned by God to the power of their enemies more or less; but that which is specially called “the indignation” is the attacks to which the Jews, on account of their sins, are subjected in the last days—the days of Antichrist. I do not say that Antichrist is the indignation; but the Jews are delivered to the instruments of the indignation of God on account of their relationship with him. God has determined its duration beforehand. (Compare Isaiah 10:5-25.)

Daniel 8:20-23. “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.” I have no doubt, dear friends, that the type was the king of the Syrians—the king of the race of the Seleucidae; but it is quite certain that this was not the end of the indignation; and, in the explanation which Daniel gives, he confines himself to what the antitype will do at the time of the end (v. 17)—the end of the indignation against the Jews (v. 19). We must put the church altogether on one side in this case: it is a question of the Jews in the latter days, at the end of the indignation.

“In the latter time [v. 23] of their kingdom [namely, of the longs who divided the Greek empire] … a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.” These kingdoms, then, must be re-established; there will again be the king of the south and the king of the north. Turkey in Asia, at this moment, embraces the territory of the king of the north, and Egypt that of the king of the south. They must reappear

as two kingdoms. We must apply this prophecy to that which is called “the end,” “the time of the end”; that is, the end of the ways of God towards the Jews— “the end of the age,” as a general term. Egypt will then be on the scene, but particularly the king of the north, whoever may then possess that dignity.

An important fact in the accomplishment of prophecy in the latter day is, not only the return of the Jews to their land, but that, being found there, their wickedness will still increase. Those words of the Saviour will be accomplished in them, “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive,” John 5:43. And again, “when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation,” Matt. 12:43-45. That is, the Jews having returned to their land, the wicked spirit, the spirit of idolatry which had left them (for there was no idolatry at the time of Jesus Christ), enters into his house, empty, swept, and prepared, and brings with him seven other impure spirits, and the last state of the nation shall be infinitely worse than the first. This may be true of others, but the Saviour applies the passage to the Jews; “Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” Thus “the transgressors will have come to the full,” the transgression of the Jews against Jehovah will be at its height. It will be, speaking generally, the end of the age, and particularly the end of those four

monarchies of the divided empire of Alexander; the Jews having become absolutely apostate, and in rebellion against God—not only as seen in their present condition, but much worse, having also returned to their land. And this scene will be in Palestine, and with a king out of one of the Greek monarchies, of whom the king of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, has certainly been a type.

Verse 23. “And … a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.” He will not only have force of arms, but also a spirit of wisdom, so as to be able to explain or interpret enigmas, a sort of prophet (though not, of course, in a good sense), who expounds profound and mysterious things. He acts by a deceitful and penetrating spirit, and in this way, upon the Jewish nation, as much as by his arms.

Verse 24. “His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power.” He will be a king in dependence upon some other potentate—strong, but not entirely by his own force. “And he shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.” Notwithstanding their state of perfidy and rebellion collectively, the Jews are, to the prophet, the holy people.71 Verse 25. “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many.” That is, it will not be by force of arms, but he will deal with the Jews in the way of peace; and by penetration and subtility, as a kind of rabbi, he will exercise much influence over the Jewish nation.

Finally, “He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.” Christ is the Prince of princes— “the prince of the host.” This king, then, will not only overthrow many Jews, but, at

the same time, will obtain immense influence over the nation; and, setting himself against the Prince of princes, he will be destroyed without hand.

You will observe that in this explanation of the conduct of the little horn, the daily sacrifice is not mentioned, its taking away is not attributed to him; and thus we perceive the importance of the correction of verse 11. He oppresses the Jews, and triumphs over them by the subtility of his spirit; he will destroy many by peace and prosperity. This is the account of a power which emanates from the Greek monarchy in the east, one who will act in the midst of the Jewish people, and who will be destroyed because he exalts himself against Christ at the end. So much for his locality, his conduct, and his end. The only mention that Daniel makes of the daily sacrifice and of the sanctuary, is in the last two verses. "And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true."

A single remark will suffice concerning the calculations of dates that have been made; I have made them myself, and I have taken all possible pains to resolve that of the "two thousand three hundred days" (v. 14), so that I do not mean it as condemning others, when I avow that I do not think they can be counted as years, and I am inclined to believe that these days were accomplished of old. But, in any case, if dates are to be assigned, we must remember that the subject is the Jews and Jerusalem, and these dates must therefore be applied to the Jews and Jerusalem, and not to the affairs of Christendom.

There may be analogous circumstances in Christendon, because the mystery of iniquity has already set in, for

although the wicked one has not yet been revealed, his principles and his pride are found in its developments, etc.; but if we are to speak with exactness, and to ask if these things have been precisely accomplished, then we must apply these passages to Jerusalem and the Jews, namely, to what is to occur at the end of the indignation. Now certainly the end of the indignation has not yet happened.

In conclusion, the subject of this lecture is one with which we may appear to have but little concern. The other little horn has more connection with us, because it belongs to the last beast; and we have to do with it, as living in those countries which will come under its dominion, as France, England, etc. (which formed a part of the Roman empire); and also, as being where Christianity has been developed, during the existence of this last beast; whereas we are not in the territory of the little horn spoken of in this lecture. But if it is important on the one hand to avoid the evil which is about to appear in the west, in the very midst of the circumstances in which we are placed; on the other hand, the necessity of doing so tends to pervert our judgment; for we are liable to attach a great importance to ourselves, and to suppose that we possess the whole scope of Scripture, whereas God, as far as regards the possession and promises of this world, has given the Jew a much larger place than ourselves. Nevertheless, we perceive at the close that our history again enters into what so much interests us, namely, the counsels of God as to His Christ; for the last thing which we see, in the great events which are to take place, is this little horn lifting up himself against the Lord of lords; and before this world can be blessed, it is necessary that the Lord

should break this little horn, in order that under His own rule the blessings of peace may come upon all.

Lecture 5 Chapter 9:1-19

In chapter 7 we traced the history of the four beasts in general, specially of the little horn who spoke great things, who blasphemed against God, who was the enemy of the saints, who represented the beast—that is, who acted as he chose, according to the power of this beast; and in chapter 8 we have the history of the horn who will be raised up from one of the four Greek monarchies, and who at the end will lift himself up against the Lord of lords, and will be destroyed without hand. The prophet now directs his thoughts and heart towards a subject, different from that in the midst of which he stood, namely, to the desolations of Jerusalem. Such is the theme of this chapter. And how was he led into this train of thought? Simply because those words were on his heart; How long, O Lord! It is a mark of faith thus to cry, when judgments are weighing heavily upon the people of God: for faith views the people according to the promises which God has made to them. A person who has laid hold of the mind of God, whose faith is in exercise, and whose heart responds, however imperfectly, to the heart of God, must desire that they should enjoy their proper blessings—the blessed consequences of their relationship with God, as it is said, “Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,” Isaiah 33:20.

Thus when affliction weighs heavily upon the people of God, and they are not enjoying all the privileges which faith realises as belonging to them, faith says, “How long, O Lord!” On the one hand, such a one cannot rest

satisfied with the misfortunes under which the people of God are labouring; and upon the other, he knows that it is impossible for God to abandon His people. Faith says, This state of suffering will have an end; the wicked, it is true, will not be relieved, but the people of God must be. Hence the frequency of such expressions in the Psalms and Prophets as “How long, O Lord! “and “There is none to say, How long!” —there is no one who knows how to count on the faithfulness of God. When under chastening, there is no faith to use this expression, a worse one is used, “I have loved strangers, and after them will I go”; and the people abandon themselves to wickedness; Jer. 2:25.

Now Daniel is here acting in faith. He had, moreover, the consolation of knowing, that when God pronounced the judgment of captivity upon His people, He had also declared its limit. Jeremiah had predicted that it should last seventy years, and that afterwards God would judge Babylon by the hand of Cyrus. Hereupon, wrapped up in the interests of the people of God, his thoughts are occupied with this promised deliverance.

But the faith which comprehends the goodness of God, and sighs for the time when the people shall enjoy their privileges, always confesses the sin which has obliged God to deprive His people for a time of these privileges. Faith never becomes discouraged, as if God were unfaithful; on the contrary, it insists upon the blame being with the people, and that God has only acted faithfully in thus dealing with them. Our chapter begins in this way. The interest which Daniel felt in his people led him to the consideration of the prophet Jeremiah, and then he entreats the Lord to confirm this blessing which He had promised by Jeremiah, that is, that He

would accomplish the deliverance of His people from captivity.

Another important fact which we remark here, and which was manifested in the Lord Jesus in perfection, is, that faith always thoroughly identifies itself with the affliction in which the people are found; and more even, with all the sins of the people of God. This is the distinguishing mark of the Spirit of Christ. Christ, indeed, went much further, inasmuch as He was able to make atonement for those sins, with which He identified Himself; but faith, according to its measure, always does so. The faith may be very feeble, but if there be any sense of the privileges of the people of God, and of the glory of God in His people, faith must have reference to this glory. But if it considers the glory, it considers also the sins which have been the occasion of the chastisement. Faith identifies itself with the state of the people, and by placing itself in their condition, perceives the cause of the judgment; for faith identifies the glory of God with His people, and itself with both; and the state of the people before God becomes the principle which animates the heart; and the more faith there is, according to the measure of its intelligence, the more does it enter into the depths into which the offenders have fallen, pass their sins in review, and confess them in identification with them; and if faith did not do this, there could be no presenting of these sins in confession, in order to their being pardoned. The Spirit which is in us (and yet more fully than the spirit of prophecy)72 necessarily looks at the thing morally. My distress at the condition of the saints is in every sense incomplete, unless the cause of that condition in God’s sight is taken

notice of—just as the high priest confessed all the sins of the people upon the scape goat.

It is fully admitted, that there may be imperfection in the act; but according to the principles of faith, there must be identification—a full confession before God. If I thought to get remission of sins (in the sense of removing chastenings) by partial confession, or without having felt their enormity, it is evident I should be mocking the just government of God; so that it is absolutely necessary, if I wish to suffer with Christ, for His church (and the case of the Jews serves morally for us), if I am led by His Spirit in love and care for His sheep, that I should humble myself, recognising the fallen condition of the saints, and confess all their sins. Just this did Daniel.

Verses 2-4. “In the first year of his [Darius’] reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God … and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.”

Daniel has the prophecy of Jeremiah present before his mind.

When I speak of the spirit of prophecy, I do not speak of a revelation made to the prophet—it is not a question of the answer which God makes to a prophet when he presents the wants of His people. Daniel was a prophet, but there is, in this instance, no special revelation made

to him. Hence we are told, that he had understood by books. He was simply one of the faithful studying prophecy. God afterwards gives him a direct revelation. But in the present instance, faith alone was acting, and he was only made to understand what God had already spoken about His people. All is revealed in the Bible, and in searching it we can, like Daniel, know and understand what God has already written about His people.

There are many questions which we cannot resolve, because we are not spiritual enough. The teaching of God is as necessary for the understanding, as for the revelation of His thoughts. It is interesting to remark this. Daniel had understood by books that the captivity was to last seventy years. As a faithful man he interests himself in the people of God, and searches, by the spiritual intelligence which is given to those who walk with God, what are His thoughts and ways.

I do not say that we have the same faith and intelligence, but we are upon the same ground. Daniel represents the faithful remnant, who have their hearts full of desires for His grace towards His people, and who, to this end, study the word of God. As a consequence, the Spirit of God leads him into supplications; for whatever be the intentions of God, there is always in His acts of government a recognition of the moral road which He has ever traced out for His people—certain moral principles by which He leads them. “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock,” Ezek. 36:37. Faith does not lead us into mere speculative knowledge—the head may be full of dates, etc., things, in a certain degree, useful—but when

the Spirit of God really acts, we turn to the Lord with prayer and supplication, and with humbleness of soul, recognising the actual condition of His people. It was thus with Daniel. “I set my face,” says he, “unto the Lord.”

Daniel had been led captive when very young, and he had taken no part in the actual iniquity of Israel. There was, therefore, no ground for self-accusation. But the fact is, there is no such thing as a Christian separated from the interests of his brethren. This could not be. The Spirit of Christ, which, in a certain sense, is more powerful in us than among the faithful in the time of Daniel, is nothing else than the Spirit of Christ in Christ; that is to say, the principle on which He acts is the same. Christ has done, He alone, that which no other could have done; we know this well. But the tendency, the feelings, the affections, of the Spirit of Christ in us cannot be other than the Spirit of Christ in Christ. If, then, Christ identifies Himself with all that the people have done from the beginning, Daniel also can say, “We have sinned,” (v. 5-7). He identifies himself with all, in the unity of the same people, though he had not been partaker of any of these sins: “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings,” etc. (v. 8). These kings were no longer in existence, but he saw the whole thing together; “we have not hearkened to the voice of thy servants the prophets.” The prophets had not prophesied to him, and had a deaf ear turned to their words. Behold then the whole mass of Israel in this confusion of face—behold the justice which belongs to God. But there is another thing which the Spirit of Christ confesses: “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against

him" (v. 9). This is a singular reason; but he had such a conviction of the goodness of God, that he says, It is not only the justice which punishes that is found in God, but, though we have sinned, there is mercy: as David says, "O Lord my God, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." As if to say, Nothing will do for me, or meet my case, but mercy; I cannot offer sacrifices like the Jews, I must have recourse to Thee—I must have mercy and pardon. The prophet draws this as a consequence—there is sin; well then, this can be met by mercy alone.

All have transgressed the law. It does not do to say, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, have not done so; Josiah had done much that was good; David was a man after God's own heart; but this or that instance is lost in the idea of a broken law. If the people of God are no longer in the enjoyment of their privileges, it is because they have sinned, and that sin is punished. Certain alterations for the better may have retarded the judgment, but judgment having once come in, the way of the Spirit is to say, that all have sinned. Besides all this, there is a government in detail, as we see in the case of Hezekiah, where chastisement was announced, and afterwards postponed. They were to go to Babylon, but not in his time. As to further matter of detail of government, consult the case of Josiah; he fell by the hand of Pharaoh-Necho, although it was said, "Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace," 2 Kings 22:20. But he was taken from the evil to come. The circumstances were afflicting, for it would appear that he should have listened to Pharaoh. Josiah was chastened individually, but he did not see, like Daniel, all that came upon Jerusalem: what a sparing from sorrow was that! "The righteous man dieth … and none

considereth that the righteous is taken away from the judgment to come."

"Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law "(v. 11). "Yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth "(v. 13); that is, not only have we transgressed, but when the chastening came we did not turn to the Lord with a true heart, to turn us from our iniquities. Here sin reached its height. "Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us "(v. 14), as He watched upon the good to bless. How terrible, when the government of God watches upon the evil to make it come upon His people!

"And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly" (v. 15). "O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain" (v. 16). The words of Daniel are quite touching. He deeply felt that it was the sin of the people that had brought down all the evil. Nevertheless, he reiterates, It is a question of Thy name; he says nothing about the name of the people. He had truly felt their wretchedness and sin; moreover, he was humbled for it, but he insists upon this point, that Jerusalem is the city of God, and so he says "Let thine anger be turned away from thy city Jerusalem." In confessing the sins of his fathers, he could not bear the idea of the city of God being in desolation; but these sins being the cause, they must be forgiven before the city can be restored. It was called by God's name, and in the eyes of Daniel, his people were, so to speak, the name of God in the earth,

as it is said, “This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob,” Psalm 24:6.

This, then, was the pleading of Daniel; he confesses all the sins of Israel. Thus, “for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach,” etc., etc. (v. 16). “O my God, incline thine ear and hear … for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies” (v. 18). “Defer not, for thine own sake, O my God, for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (v. 19). God Himself is made the motive. That faith which perceives the sins of the people, by reason of the glory of God which identifies itself with such people, can claim deliverance from the results of these sins; because this very glory necessitates the forgiveness, God having identified Himself in goodness with the people: and so much the more, inasmuch as it is this glory on which faith feeds and with which it is pre-occupied, and which, as before said, causes the extent of sin and failure to be felt. But if God is to act for His name, He must deliver Jerusalem, for there was no other place on the earth which bore His name.

If the same spirit animated us, as Christians, we should be saying, It is for the sins of the church that we are suffering, and that we are held in contempt by all the world.

Something remains to be said, dear friends, as to the place which Daniel takes prophetically. It has struck me, in reading the chapter, that he does not take the position in which the promises made to Abraham would have placed him. The full blessing of the Jews will be

grounded on another truth than that which Daniel pleads here.

The blessings of the Jews, such as they are yet to enjoy, are based upon the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, without condition. These are not touched upon here by Daniel. They have never possessed the land under the law, properly speaking; but they have had it, according to the promises made to Moses in favour of the people, at the time of the mediation at Sinai. The land has never been possessed on the principle of obedience to the law, for immediately after it was given, the apostasy of the golden calf came in. Moreover, they have never yet enjoyed the land in quality of Messiah's people. In order to enjoy the land according to the promises, they must enjoy it according to the new covenant; but as yet, neither the Messiah nor the new covenant has introduced the people into it. The new covenant is not yet established with the Jews. The promises cannot yet have been accomplished, because Christ is the true seed of Abraham. The Jews have been rejected, and the accomplishment has never yet taken place. These, viz., the Messiah and the new covenant, are two great elements of the future blessing of this people.

The fact is, that God, after the idolatry of the golden calf, placed His people Israel (consult Exodus 32, 33, 34), under a government, founded, half upon law, and half upon grace, for when Moses ascended the mount of Sinai, God declared His name (Exodus 34:6) as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." This was grace, whilst at the same time He gave him the law of the ten commandments, so that the people were placed under a

condition of obedience. This was the condition under which Israel was placed from the time that Moses ascended Sinai the second time. Although he had previously confessed the sins of Israel, and, by his intercession, obtained the pardon, through grace, of the people, yet God, notwithstanding, replaces them under a condition of obedience to the law.

In all that there was no question of Jerusalem, but only of the great principles which were the groundwork of the relationship between God and His people. Later, as in Leviticus 26, we have threats made to the people should they fail in their conduct. It is a long chapter, where blessings are promised in the event of obedience. He engages even to place His tabernacle in their midst, and every earthly blessing was promised them (v. 3-13), “but if ye will not hearken to me,” (v. 14) they are menaced with the heaviest judgments and at last are to be cast out of their land (v. 31-39). This was precisely what befell them, when they were carried captive to Babylon (compare 2 Chron. 36:21, with Lev. 26:34), and the land enjoyed her Sabbaths, during the time of the desolation of Jerusalem. Once every seven years there was to be a year of rest, but the people had not faith in God to observe it; and the consequence of their not believing God in not allowing the sabbatic years was, that God found this means of enforcing obedience to His law. A promise succeeds this threat, “If they shall confess their iniquity … then I will remember my covenant with Jacob,” etc., etc. (v. 40-42), that is, they would be brought back. The same principle is presented in Deuteronomy 28, 29. We have conditional blessings and cursings, and subsequently (chap. 30) promises;

that is, grace for those who repent in the land whither they have been carried captive.

It was this special case that Daniel had to do with—the case, namely, foreseen in the threatenings. I would call your attention also to 1 Kings 9, for there God shews, in answer to Solomon, what He would do in case of infidelity, and He identifies His name with the city of Jerusalem, and particularly with the temple; 1 Kings 8:29. In his prayer he does not ask for the accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham, but only of those made to Moses, which place the people under the condition of obedience when in their land (v. 56). It was this prayer which was answered.

We have seen what passed with Moses. And when Solomon dedicates the temple to God, he asks Him to acknowledge it always according to His principles of government as revealed to Moses. Now, the people having sinned, Jeremiah had prophesied that there should be a special chastisement for seventy years, and Daniel takes this up. He does not go back to the promises made to Abraham, but only as far as the words of Solomon and Moses; Dan. 9:11.

Verse 16. “Let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain.” God had, according to Solomon’s prayer, chosen Jerusalem. We will not now enter into the answer which God gives, except to say that He declares all that should happen to Jerusalem; but in taking as His occasion the return to that city of the captives, He goes on much farther, even to the circumstances of that city to the very end. He does it, as it were, under a Mosaic point of view, and not in revealing its final state of blessedness, as being an

answer to the prayer respecting the judgments which had befallen the holy city, on account of the violation of the law of Moses; the result of which was, that the city was placed under the judgments which Moses had threatened.

It may be well to point to two or three passages, as to this choice of Jerusalem: for instance, Psalms 78:68; 87 and 132. This last opens with a description of finding and bringing back the ark, and giving it a place. Then Jehovah speaks, “If thy children will keep my covenant.… For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it,” (v. 12-14). Nothing can be more striking than the goodness of God throughout this Psalm. God goes beyond all that is asked of Him. The prayer is, “Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy” (v. 9). But the answer is, “I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy” (v. 16). Again, the prayer had been, “Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength” (v. 8-10). And the reply is, as we have seen, “The Lord hath chosen Zion: this is my rest for ever,” etc. Again the prayer is, “For thy servant David’s sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed” (v. 10): to which God answers, “There will I make the horn of David to bud.” In every case the answer largely surpasses the request. There is yet a passage (Zech. 2:11) which shews the exceeding joy which Christ will feel over Jerusalem in the last days. “And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his

portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again."73 These blessings follow upon all the trying and humbling circumstances of which Daniel treats, for it must be remembered that in Zechariah it is "after the glory" (v. 8), that is, beyond the period included in Daniel's prophecy. Again, in Zechariah 12:2, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to all the people round about." It is an elect city, just as Israel is an elect people, or the church an elect bride.

Let it be again observed, that whilst Daniel is personally concerned with the return of Israel from Babylon under the circumstances predicted by Moses, the Spirit of God uses this thought to continue the history of the people, or rather of the city (introducing the chief events of the first coming of Christ), as far, but only as far, as the point where final blessing commences; for the matter of Zechariah and the Psalms, just now touched upon, is not entered into. The essential point, however, is the spirit in which Daniel identifies himself with the people of God, confessing all their sin as his own before God.

Lecture 6 Chapter 9:20-27

These verses relate the answer to the confession and prayer of Daniel. The faithfulness of God is in full action, exactly as promised in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and in the answer to the prayer of Solomon. He had promised that if they were led into captivity, and should, in the midst of their enemies, turn to Him with all their heart (He never said, if they kept the law to the letter, for this would not have been possible to them) He would bring them back.

Verse 21. "Whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the

beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." He repeats twice, "whiles I was speaking"; he had not finished before Gabriel appeared and arrested it by the delivery of the prophecy following.

It is not, we may say in passing, always so. On another occasion, Daniel spent three weeks in fasting and prayer, for God was trying his faith. The angel was to accomplish the purpose of God before communicating it; the Lord permitted that the prince of Persia should hinder its accomplishment for three weeks. It was a question of deciding something at the court of Persia, and those there, who were opposed to an edict for favouring the Jews, could put obstacles to its promulgation. When the angel of God had prevailed in these counsels, he came and said so. This is very instructive to us, for God always governs the world. Whilst the throne of God was at Jerusalem, He governed the world immediately (not only Israel but the world, and this according to the good or bad conduct of Israel); whilst after that, although He did not cease to govern everywhere, already (even in this book—Israel being in captivity) He is seen acting by the secret springs of His providence, and not by the immediate action of the revealed rule of His law, as in the midst of His people.74 Although the child of God is able to confide entirely in Him, for "the very hairs of our head are numbered," it is happy to see the government of God manifested openly in the world. It will be the case in the millennium; the government will be immediate and direct, so that the justice of God will be seen by men, whilst now, all goes on secretly. His ways are often a labyrinth to us now, for our normal position, as being saints, is quite different.

God is perfecting us for heaven, and has no object in manifesting in us His righteousness upon earth. The heavenly thing is much better and more precious. He makes us pass through all kinds of earthly trial with this object in view. A Christian is often astonished at what he suffers individually for righteousness' sake—it is a general case. But for the Jews God will appear, according to His promise, the moment they turn with humility and confession to Him. Thus does He answer Daniel. We have already observed, that faith never forgets that Jerusalem is the city of God's holiness, and that His eyes are there continually. Even when the Israelites have failed, and when God is obliged to abandon them for the time, to faith it ceases not to be the holy city of God.

Verse 21. "About the time of the evening oblation." This expression makes us feel the Jewish atmosphere we are in, for of course there was no evening sacrifice at Babylon. Jerusalem was burnt, but faith remained. It was the time of the evening sacrifice—the Jewish scene fills his thoughts.

Verse 22. "And he informed me and talked with me and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding." Verses 23, 24. "For thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" —observe how the angel accredits the faith of Daniel, making him the representative both of Jerusalem and the people—" to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies."

Many Christians find great difficulty in this entire passage, from their not seeing that whilst it has already had an accomplishment (as far as is needed for the establishment of its truth), on the other hand, it has not been fulfilled at all. If we do not see this, it is impossible to understand the events that are still future. All that was necessary on the part of God, in order that the events announced in the verse we have been reading should take place, has been accomplished, and even proposed to the Jewish people; but still nothing has taken place as to the actual accomplishment of them, the train of circumstances having been interrupted, and the church (the heavenly people) having been introduced in the interval, until the time decreed of God, when these events shall be taken up again with the Jewish people, when the due time comes, whether by the apostasy which exists in Christendom or by the ripe state of the Jewish people in a bad sense and in a good one.

Let us consider, for example, the new covenant. It will be established with Israel and Judah; Jer. 31. This is not yet accomplished. The Jews are dispersed towards the four winds of heaven. Now a covenant must be established by the blood of a victim; and so the blood of the new covenant has been shed, and therefore all that is necessary for the bringing in of this covenant with the Jews has been done on the part of God. But actually nothing as to this nation receiving it has taken place; for they rejected the Messiah both personally and under the preaching of the apostles. Meanwhile the counsels of God as to the church have occupied and do occupy the interval, this heavenly people having nothing in

common, as to their position, with that which God did and will do for the Jews.

This point being ascertained, beloved friends, the verse becomes comparatively easy; indeed, we may say, that the special difficulty disappears, for we perceive that as to fact God has completed everything. He has sent the Messiah, He has presented Him to the people, the blood of the covenant has been shed, and propitiation made. But if it be asked, whether these blessings have been efficacious with regard to the Jews as a nation, it must be answered, that nothing has been done; and this is our present question. We must not here, then, consider a satisfaction apart from its application, but rather its efficacy as regards the Jewish nation; and thus we shall be led to consider whether the nation is in those circumstances which should precede the time when the application of this blood shall be made to them. “He [Christ] died not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad,” John 11:51, 52. Now in Daniel we have to consider the application of this blood to the Jewish people, and in the explanation of all the prophecies, we must take this fact into consideration. It is clear that the death of the Messiah is, in a certain sense, a fulfilment of this prophecy, for His death is a propitiation made for sin. But what is here said of it, taking into account the object of the passage, is in nowise accomplished. Having prefaced with these remarks, let us examine what is the result of all this for the people.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people.” There is no reference here to us Christians; the verse refers to the people of Daniel, and to the holy city of Daniel. The

seventy weeks are only applicable to them. There may be, in this portion, many events which will also affect us, the Antichrist for example, for both Jews and Gentiles have had to do with that wicked one and still more have they to do with the cutting off of the Messiah. But the aim of the prophecy is “thy people and thy holy city “(that is, the Jews and Jerusalem). Once put aside this people and city as objects of the thoughts of God here below, and there is no longer applicability in the prophecy; so that we must set aside Christianity for the moment, as not being the object here. And why? Because Christianity has, in its position before God, nothing to do with either Jew or Gentile. London has as much to do with Christianity as Jerusalem. Jerusalem is, to a Christian, no more holy than any other city. There may be deeply interesting associations connected with it; but it is in no sense whatever our “holy city.” “Seventy weeks,” then, “are determined upon thy [Daniel’s] people.”

Now for the details. Verse 25, “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” In the first period, the space of seven weeks, Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, and that, in troublous times. This has been accomplished, as we find from Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 26. “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not75 for himself.” We know that this has likewise been accomplished. As the Head of the Jewish people, He has been on earth, and been rejected. As to His inheritance, as to the holy city, particularly as Messiah, He has had nothing at all. He was cut off; He

has had nothing as the Messiah except spittings and death. And as the Son of David, He has had absolutely nothing. He is now at the right hand of the Father, but in His title of King of the Jews, He has not yet been owned. He entered Jerusalem as king, riding upon an ass, and was rejected.

Verse 26. “And the people of the prince that shall come.” This is some new person, not the Messiah; otherwise how could it be said of this person, “he shall come? “According to this prophecy, Messiah had already come, and had been cut off. Besides, it is not the people of Christ who is cut off, that” shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This happened according to the saying of the chief priests and Pharisees; John 11:48. “The Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” Neither is it the prince himself who thus acts. It is the people of the future prince who do this— of the prince that shall come—the chief of the empire (Roman), of the last beast. The fourth monarchy, viz., the Roman, destroyed the city and the sanctuary, as it is the body of which he, as prince, will be the head.

Verse 26. “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” Verse 27. “And he shall confirm the [“a,” margin] covenant.” If it had been said the covenant, one might suppose it of some covenant already existing, whereas there is no such thought in the expression. “He shall confirm covenant”—that is, establish it, not with many, but with “the “many, or the mass. As Christ had but a very small remnant, whilst the mass of the Jews rejected Him, the prince who shall come shall establish a covenant with the mass. A remnant will undoubtedly

escape, but the covenant which this prince shall confirm will be with the mass of the people.

“And he shall confirm a covenant with the76 many for one week.” This is the week which still remains, for Christ was cut off, it is said, after the sixty-nine weeks. After this period, we are told of “the people of the prince” (the Romans under Titus), who destroy the city, and then we have the prince himself confirming a covenant for one week, which is the last or seventieth week. We are to leave off counting from the time the Messiah was cut off, viz., at the end of the sixty-nine weeks. After this period, time, so to speak, does not go on: God does not take count of it; it is indefinite. But the seventieth week still remains to be fulfilled. [See footnote page 32.]

“And in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (v. 27). It is evident that at this time the Jews are re-established with their sacrifices and oblations. The “prince that shall come” will establish an alliance with the Jews during one week. But at the expiration of the half, he will completely change his conduct, and will cause their sacrifices to cease. He thinks, as before explained, to change the times (Jewish festal days) and the laws; they are delivered into his hands, and he effaces them. This is the history as far as facts go.77 We, as believers, comprehend that the Lord Jesus made the (Jewish) sacrifice cease to those who believed on Him, just as to them, that is, to faith, John the baptist was Elias, according to those words, “If ye can receive it, this is Elias which was to come.” In like manner to faith, Christ was the Messiah, the Son of man, to His disciples looked at as believing Jews. Nevertheless, He adds, “ye shall

not have gone through the cities of Israel, before the Son of man shall come."78 But as to the Jewish people itself, the Spirit omits entirely all that we Christians enjoy, because in fact they rejected Jesus.

If interpreters insist that Jesus Himself laboured during the first half of the seventieth week, and that account is taken of it (the half week), for those who believed, but that as to the nation this half week has been lost, on account of their unbelief, and that they will receive the Antichrist, who will present himself in a like manner, I am far from objecting. He certainly did establish divine relationships with the little remnant of His disciples, whether one hundred and twenty, or five hundred, and in consequence, as to their labours, He speaks but of the last half of the seventieth or last week. At the beginning of this last half their labours are interrupted; the other half is lost in the general history of their previous labours. For the Jews the whole week is yet to come, because they have not received Christ at all. All that can be said as concerning them is, that the Messiah has been cut off and has had nothing. For (whatever computation we may incline to, as to the disciples), it is said, there shall be sixty and two weeks (besides the previous seven), unto Messiah the prince, and after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off. The Holy Spirit leaves the matter in the shade, because He counts with reference to the nation, for whom the last week has been null and void, and it is the false prince* (Antichrist), in whom the thread of the narrative is resumed, as if it were at the end of the sixty-ninth week; although, as we know, the church, the heavenly people, have meanwhile been introduced and already occupied a period, considered as to earth, of more than eighteen

hundred years. Thus a place is left for faith, whilst as to the history, it is one of unbelief. (Compare Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 4:19.) Christ the Prince has never yet been Prince, nevertheless He was so to faith in His disciples. A question for the consideration of those who examine this most interesting detail of prophecy, is, whether the Lord presented Himself officially to the Jews as Prince or King, before His entry into Jerusalem, according to Zechariah 9:9. Upon that, we know, He was cut off.

The seventieth week is, then, still to have its accomplishment under Antichrist. The Jews at first, with fair appearances before them, acknowledge him as their chief;79 as Jesus Christ said, John 5:43, “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” Thus Antichrist offers himself, and the Jews receive him. For the first half of the week80 all goes on well, but then he turns in anger against them, destroys their system, and exalts himself against God.

That which Jesus did on the part of God, Antichrist counterfeits, according to the word just quoted: “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come,” etc. Therefore I allow, in a certain sense, that to faith this cessation of sacrifice (alluded to previously, “he shall cause the sacrifice to cease “) has taken place. For the little remnant did own Christ to be there; but for the entire nation there has been as yet no accomplishment of any part of the week.

Scripture is not silent concerning this covenant of the Jews with Antichrist, and their consequent judgment. In Isaiah 28:14, we read, “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem…” “Your covenant with death shall be

disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (v. 18). These are the threats, as to the moral position in which they shall be found in that day.

It is the last half of the week which occupies the mind of the Spirit of God as to these terrible events at the end. Thus the little horn is to continue "a time, times, and half a time" (viz., three years and a half, or the half of a week). Power is given to him for this time. So in Revelation 13:5," There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies, and power was-given unto him to continue forty and two months."

I do not cite here the similar period of the two witnesses, because I believe that their time of prophesying is during the first half week.81 It is a time of testimony in order that the remnant may withdraw themselves from the influence of Antichrist;82 and during that time God preserves those who bear testimony, as well as the sanctuary and the altar, and those who worship there.

I have said that the sacrifice and oblation would be restored. This is noticed in prophecy, although at the same time their re-establishment will be utterly rejected by God. It is written in Isaiah 66, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made" —an intimation of the restoration of the temple, but then— "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (viz., the remnant).

The sacrifices are offered but rejected: read Isaiah 66:3-6. Again, Daniel n:31, “And [they] shall take away the daily sacrifice,” etc. Again, in Daniel 12, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” This is thirty days over. It will take thirty days more for purification, and yet forty-five more for complete peace; verse 12, “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.” This latter half week is still referred to, in which, the daily sacrifice being taken away, Antichrist will be there, and the abomination of desolation set up in the holy place. (Compare chap. 8:11.)

In Matthew 24 we find this same circumstance exactly. The Lord, having alluded to wars and rumours of wars, becomes more precise. He had spoken until verse 14 in quite a general way, and, like Daniel, declared that the city and temple should be destroyed, and also the people. But as He goes on to speak of the labours of His disciples, He enters more fully into the general history. “Many shall be offended,” etc.; and He counsels His disciples as to their conduct, as witnesses of the truth, and tells them that before the end came “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness.”

All this was to happen, not at a given time during the seventy weeks, but, generally speaking, before the end, but of course after the discourse and departure (death) of Jesus. Afterwards He says, “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)” (v. 15). Here is the abomination of

desolation placed at Jerusalem, the testimony is over, and the disciples have only to flee: “then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Jerusalem is then delivered over to the judgment which awaits it.

There is yet another important and interesting circumstance, as to this last half week. We find it in Revelation 12. We shall see that this date of the abomination fits in exactly with the time of Satan being driven out of heaven. The woman flees into the wilderness (v. 6), where she is fed one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Verse 7. “There was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon”; read to the end of verse 12, “knowing that he [Satan] hath but a short time.” Now it is exactly during this half week that the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place. This is given more in detail in chapter 11.

Further, “He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.” That is, by means (or on account) of the abominable wings, or literally, “on account of the wing of abominations.” The word “abomination” is always in the Old Testament simply “an idol.” For example: the abomination of the Moabites was the idol of the Moabites. Solomon put the abomination of the Ammonites upon the mount of Olives, that is, the idol. The word “wing” always gives the idea of “protection.” “Under his wings shalt thou trust,” Psalm 91:4.

“On account of the wing of abominations,” means as it appears to me, on account of the protection of idols.

They take refuge in idolatry for a protection; and this is the finishing stroke of their wickedness, and the consequence is, the desolation which descends upon the desolated one, until the end of these seventy weeks—a desolation always increasing, for it is not alone the destruction of the city, but also Antichrist who deceives the people, who makes a covenant with them, and, as it were, holds them in his grip. God is set aside and denied; Antichrist even makes himself God; the sanctuary, if not destroyed, is at least profaned, and degraded in every way. The abomination is put into the holy place, and thus idolatry is introduced. At last Antichrist sits there as God, he allows or confesses nothing at all but himself, until God is no longer able to endure him, or those who are subject to him.

There is no account of this in our present chapter. But there is in Daniel 7; and in the New Testament the Lord thus speaks of the Jewish generation, “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places,” etc. (Matt. 12:43). Consult the whole passage. They enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. “Even so shall it be also with this wicked generation.” This is the history of the Jews. I do not say there may not be other applications of the passage. What was this wicked spirit? It was idolatry. After the Babylonish captivity there had been no more idol worship; the unclean spirit had gone out, and the house was empty, though there was every kind of profession. Then the spirit of idolatry which found no rest returns to the house at the end. It will be the case with the Jews, and then there will be an open rebellion against God; they will be joined with Antichrist, who makes war upon their Messiah. And it

will be then on account of the protection of these abominations, that “the desolation shall be poured out upon the desolate one.” See Isaiah 54:1; Lam. 1:13 and 3:11. Compare Daniel 10, 11 and 12. In the last chapter we have the complete deliverance, and he adds in this last, thirty days, and forty-five days, to the half week. Then all will be happy and blessed. There will be a certain time necessary after the destruction of Antichrist to re-establish everything in order. The whole of this chapter is in affinity with the end of Daniel 7, and with Revelation 13 and 17. We shall have to consider it again in connection with chapter 11.

Lecture 7 Chapter 10

I shall take a few verses of this chapter to mark the position of Daniel when he received this answer, and the circumstances by which this reply was introduced. We shall find, dear friends, some instructive circumstances at the commencement, in the position of Daniel and in the state of his soul. God also notices this, for the man clothed in linen says to him, “Fear not, Daniel,” etc. (v. 12). The position of Daniel was that of affliction in the presence of his God.

The date of the third year of Cyrus (v. 1-3) is important, because the Jews (the remnant at least) had returned to their land, from the first year of the reign of this prince; so that it could not be the captivity of Babylon which occupied Daniel’s heart at the moment. He had remained at Babylon after the departure of a great number of these Jews for the land of Canaan; but the people were not at all in the state which the prophetical Spirit in Daniel could recognise as the fulfilment of blessings; and the consequence of this is, that the

prophetical Spirit of Christ in Daniel is still occupied with the state of this people, and can in nowise content itself, even although there was a certain degree of blessing with them. Cyrus had done much, as we may learn from 2 Chronicles 36:22 and Ezra 1. The decree to rebuild had already been given in the first year of his reign. But the Spirit of God had caused Daniel to range over the whole period of the Gentiles, and he well understood, though there had been a kind of deliverance — some relief through the goodness of God, a little refreshment from above—that nothing was really accomplished of the divine promises. It was impossible that the prophetic Spirit of Christ in Daniel's person should remain tranquil while awaiting the accomplishment of the intentions of God's love to His people; so that Daniel was then, as if the captivity were not over, bowing down his soul before God.

There had been, on the occasion of rebuilding the temple, features of sorrow in another quarter; Ezra 3. The elders of the people, who had seen the old temple, wept; and at the same time, the younger, who had not known it, uttered cries of joy. And this sorrow is often felt in like circumstances by those who have apprehended the divine counsels, either as to what God had set up at the beginning, or what He will yet set up. Like Daniel, they weep in the midst of the blessings, in which consists the joy of those who only think of the present moment. The cries of joy prevailed without, for it is said, these cries were heard afar off; but amongst the people present they knew not which to distinguish. But at Jerusalem, as well as at Babylon, he who had a sense, however imperfect, of what the state of the people of God ought to be, would not fail to recognise

their wretched condition in the midst of these joyful exclamations. “Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land… behold, we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us,” Neh. 9:36, 37. And yet these Persian kings to whom Nehemiah alludes were altogether favourable. It is true there was cause of anguish; at one time the counsels of God prevailed, and at another those of Satan in hindering the rebuilding; but, generally speaking, the kings of Persia were favourable to the Jews. But so long as the Gentiles were holding dominion over the people of God, it was impossible that the Spirit of God in the prophet could allow that the designs of God regarding His people had been accomplished. He could bless Him for all the good that existed, but even when the decree had gone forth, the elders wept. Nehemiah said, “We are servants,” etc.; and Daniel continued to afflict his soul before God.

We often find in Scripture some apparently little circumstance which is an index to us of the thoughts of the Spirit of God. Thus the date of the third year of Cyrus opens a field of interesting thought, for the position in which Daniel was found enabled God, so to speak, to continue to reveal to him His intentions about the people. Evidently God had separated Daniel from the things which were doing for the momentary resettling of the people, that He might lead his heart still onward to the “end of the indignation” which really still subsisted.

There is also another subject of intruction here, which I would not omit. I allude to the actings of God by means of angels, and how there were demons who sought to hinder the ministry of the providence of God, as to His people. “Fear not,” says the angel to Daniel, “for from

the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words" (v. 12). Nevertheless, the answer of God by the angel did not arrive until three weeks after. Then the angel relates to Daniel how this happened, and the difficulties he had to encounter at the court of Persia, by the opposition of the prince of the kingdom against the Jews, and that Michael, one of the chief princes, had come to help him. Daniel had known nothing of all this. God, in this way, exercises the obedience of His angels, and at the same time puts the faith of His servants to the test. Thus, then, is Daniel pre-occupied with his people, and with the glory of God in their midst; he cannot content himself with anything short of the accomplishment of the promises, and therefore he humbles and identifies himself with the misery and affliction of the people, according to the Spirit of Him who said, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Then God, who has given His servant grace thus to behave, acts from on high to reveal all His purpose to him, putting at the same time his patience to the proof, whilst the angel is combating at the court of Persia. I have no doubt it is the same for us; God also puts our faith to the trial. It is not that He does not hear and answer (He knows perfectly beforehand what the end will be); but He wishes to see if faith goes to the end of the difficulty, and then He answers. Faith, which is much more precious than gold which perishes, is thus put through its trial, and "found unto praise … at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In another view we see the exercise of the angels in the government of God.

Verse 14. “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.” Here is the answer to the affliction of Daniel, but an answer not yet to be accomplished. There are two ways of judging of the thoughts of God as to His people. The first is to consider the condition in which God had placed them in the beginning—how He had formed and fashioned them of old: the second is to consider (in what state the church will be found, or, to express it in reference to the case of Daniel), in what condition the people of God will be found at the end, when God shall have accomplished His counsels concerning them.

Thus, when Daniel considered the actual condition of his people, they might be found to possess many blessings from God and chastisements also; but the thoughts of the prophet, or spiritual man, would be either toward the state in which God had placed them in the beginning or toward that in which they will be found at the end. The same may be said of man in the abstract. If I think of my actual condition, I may either revert back to Adam without sin, or I may look forward to the resurrection state, in which I shall be hereafter, and realise in spirit either the one or the other; and compare my present state with the state of Adam in innocence, or of Christ in glory. So with the church and the Jew. If I consider the latter, when first established in his privileges, or at the end in the glory of the Messiah, both the one and the other evidences the state of imperfection which existed at the time of their return from the Babylonish captivity. Again, if I consider the church at the beginning, I see the effect of the power of the Spirit of God; but I can also, by examining the promises of God, view the church when she will be in glory with Christ; and in either case

her present weakness is apparent. Daniel did these two things. In his confession, in chapter 9, he had considered much more the past condition of the people, whilst here it is much more their future, such as will ensue at the conclusion of the trials of chapter 12.

The introduction of Michael, the great prince, who stands for the people of God, necessarily leads us on to the occurrences at the end according to the counsels of which he assures the accomplishment. The actual circumstances they were in give the leading idea. He begins from that time, and goes on until the time when the counsels of God should be brought to pass. We only need touch upon the historical part. The Persian and Grecian empires form the framework of the historical narrative; but the object of the prophecy, as may be seen, verse 14, is what was to take place in the latter days.

Verse 20. “Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.” These two empires are viewed in relation to the people of God. They were, as we know, the second and third monarchies. The first part of the history of the third or Grecian is given us in chapter 11:1-4 (these verses giving the connecting link of this monarchy with that of Persia).

After its (the Grecian’s) establishment under the first powerful king, it was divided into four parts. We have already had some notices of it. The two principal kings were those of the north and south—principal, not alone in regard to their power, but because either the one or the other had always possession of the land of Canaan.

This is why they are introduced here; the history of the holy land and of the people of God, after the establishment of the Greek or third monarchy, occupies the mind of the Spirit. Every one is agreed that as to these kings, it is a history of the Ptolemies and Seleucidae, and the history is so exact, that unbelievers have sometimes said that Daniel was written after the events.

At verse 20 we come to the history of the last of these kings. I do not say that what is here related of him will be accomplished at the end; but at all events he is the type of that which will take place at the end. It is not my object to enter into all the details of the historical part; he makes an expedition against the king of the south, then a second; chap. 11:29. I pass by the details also of these two kings. “At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former [expedition] or as the latter.” “For the ships of Chittim shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved and shall return” (v. 30).

Here the power of the west (Chittim) is introduced into this history of the two monarchies. The people of God were situated between the kings of the north and south, exactly as lately the Holy Land became an object of contest between Mahomet Ali and the Sultan.

Now, on the occasion of the last expedition here noticed (chap, n), these ships of Chittim arrive on the scene. A power from the west mixes itself up with these two eastern powers (viz., the king of the north and the king of the south)—some power from the other coast of the Mediterranean, whether Italy or Greece. But further, we also find apostates from the holy covenant. Thus there

are, first, Jews, allowed to be the objects of the covenant of God, and those who are apostates to it; secondly, those from the west, north of the Mediterranean, who enter into the previous quarrel; and by these new elements the scene is completely changed. Then in verse 31 we have the last of these kings, viz., of the kings of the north, brought before us. “And arms shall stand on his part,” or more literally “forces [arms] shall rise from [out of] him.” The expression “shall rise from him,” or “shall come from him,” may be used in two senses: a king’s lieutenant, one who takes his place as commandant; or one who succeeds him in the government. “Arms shall rise from him, and they [the arms] shall pollute the sanctuary of strength [or, which is the fortress], and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and shall place the abomination which maketh desolate.”

This verse is of the highest importance, as giving us the date of the last indignation. The Lord Jesus has drawn our particular attention to this date in Matthew 24 and at chapter 12:11 of this prophecy, the calculation which serves to mark the time of blessing sets out from this event. “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days,” etc., etc.

But to return to chapter 11:31, as to the “forces which shall rise,” it will be some one who will come on the part of the king of the north (I do not say who will be the king of the north). Some one will come on the part of him who will be the king of the north in these times, who will introduce his forces—his arms—into the holy place, who

will defile the sanctuary, and who will place “the abomination that maketh desolate.”

As to history, this is evidently what did take place. It was the generals of Antiochus Epiphanes who defiled the sanctuary. This was by no means the accomplishment: otherwise the Lord would not have spoken of the event as future. A long time after the reign of this king, the Lord Jesus came into the world and spoke of this prophecy as yet to be. But we have another proof of the time when these things will take place—a proof which is connected with the Lord’s word in Matthew 24. In Daniel 12:1 we read, “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” etc.; and the Lord Himself speaks exactly thus concerning the same time: and then the people of God are to be delivered—an event which had not taken place in the time of Jesus, nor has it yet.

It is clear we must put aside any Christian circumstances, because it is plainly stated that the trouble shall happen to the people of Daniel in the last days. Now we are not the people of Daniel, and these last days have not yet occurred to them. The verse speaks of arms—forces—which come from this king, and which defile the sanctuary, take away the daily sacrifice, and place the abomination which causes desolation.

It would appear,83 if we consider the forces as sent by him, that the king of the north of those times would be in possession of the promised land: at least, that certain attempts upon it, on his part, had succeeded. But after this paranthetic verse (viz. 31) the prophet proceeds with the general history. Verses 32, 33, “And such as do

wickedly against covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries."

We are able now in some sort to understand the state of the people of God before the end. This wicked one (I do not say who it is) will be, at that time, in the land of Canaan, and in the possession of the territory of the king of the north, and "will corrupt those who do wickedly against [or as to] the covenant," viz., those Jews who are not true to Jewish hopes. He will incite them to apostasy —for this is the force of the word rendered by 'he will corrupt'; "but the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." Here we have a division of Jews into true and false, and the development of good and evil. But we must note that they that understand among the people and instruct many (v. 33) are the same as those spoken of in chapter 12:3, 10, and also in chapter 11:35. They are the Maskilim, or persons instructed in the mind of God, and are a class of persons apart. Thus there will be a remnant of Jews, not only those who are spared in general, but persons instructed in the mind of God; and we find the same specially distinguished in Isaiah 65 and 66, besides those who will escape the judgment executed against the wicked ones. These understanding ones among the people (v. 33) shall teach the multitude (the masses); or will give instruction to them. I translate the Hebrew word by 'the multitude' because the word 'many' of the text has the article in Hebrew, as if one said 'the many'; and the article, in my judgment, throughout these chapters is special.84 "Yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, many days." Such is the condition of the people, unless you choose to apply this passage to the Maskilim. My own opinion is, that it applies to the

people, because of verse 35:85 “Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.” The trial of faith will be through them, for as faithful Jews one should have supposed that such as these might surely count on the help of God; for they have been encouraging others to “trust in the Lord.” Nevertheless, some of these are to fall, and then, unless faith is very strong, the others will say “Where is their God?” as in Psalms 42 and 43, which express, in the language of the Spirit of Christ, the anguish of the remnant, of whom their enemies say, “Where is their God?” And when these understanding ones fall who had hope in Him, the unbelievers will say, there is no intervention of God in their behalf: but these judgments being appointed, the people are left (speaking generally) throughout the period to go through them, and to undergo the consequence of their position.

Now Christ, in Matthew 24, speaks of these times in general —of the things (taking, as an occasion, His announcement of the destruction of the temple) which were to take place after His death. He takes these times, and speaks of the same circumstances, and so He gives the same starting point, where one is given, viz., the moment when the times and the laws are delivered into the hand of the little horn—of the king who, during twelve hundred and sixty days, does “his own will”; the moment, namely, when the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place, which event marks the final desolation of Jerusalem.

After this general history of the state of the Jews, the idolatrous and wicked king is introduced in verse 36: “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god,” etc. Verse 37: “Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women “(that is, the Messiah who had been promised), “nor regard any God: for he shall magnify himself above all.” This is tKe wicked one. Verse 38: “But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces “; viz., in the place of the true God he shall honour Mahuzzim for God—some idolatry; for Mahuzzim signifies fortresses or high places fortified. There is probably some connection between this and the forces of war upon which the king reckoned. “And a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold,” etc. It is to some invention of a god that he does this. Verse 39: “Thus shall he do in the most strong holds [Mahuzzim] with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many [the many,] and shall divide the land for gain.”

A difficulty here presents itself: “he shall cause them to rule over the many.” Who are they whom he shall cause to rule? It appears that he will establish certain powers in connection with these false gods, and he will be there with these Mahuzzim in these fortresses, and then it will be the instruments of his power, who will join themselves to him. He will make them (the instruments) rule over the mass of Jews, and he will divide their land into lots as a recompense. This seems to be so far the history of this king.

It is remarkable how he is introduced quite suddenly. We must ever remember that when the prophet is occupied with the purposes of God towards His people at “the end

of the indignation," it is in connection with the kings of the north and south, and with the land of Palestine, His own land, which lies between them; and that in the latter day, when the people will be under the divine judgments in that very land, there will be a small faithful remnant, who hold fast by the holy covenant, when the great mass are ready to apostatise. This is the subject which the Spirit brings forward, and inasmuch as the wicked one, this king, will be found in these countries,86 he is introduced as mixed up with these kings of the north and south.

In the New Testament, the sources of wickedness are quite different; for the Spirit of God there considers the moral condition of Christendom, where this apostasy arises, and in consequence, the wicked one is portrayed as a public apostate; but evidently it is the same person.

In chapter 787 we saw him in yet another point of view, viz., head of the last monarchy—the little horn of the fourth beast, whilst here he is seen as a king who has to do geographically with the eastern countries, and is among the Jewish people. I shall quote two other passages, where this idea of the king is found. Observe, he is not called the king of the north, though occupying geographically his territory; he is called "the king," because in the eyes of the prophet he holds that position. He it is who exalts himself, and pretends to be the king and the pastor of the people of God—a pretender, and a bad one, to these two offices; but as such he will present himself, and he is so called in Isaiah 30:33: "Yea, for the king it is prepared." Consult also Isaiah 57:9: "Thou wentest to the king with ointment." This passage speaks of the condition of the Jews, and of the accusations of God against them. Both these

portions touch upon the history of the Antichrist after he has become king.

There is one more observation needed, that we may be able to link this remarkable parenthesis (in which “the king” is introduced on account of his connection with the kings of the north and south) with the rest of the chapter: it is, that from verse 21 to the end of verse 35 the prophet is always speaking of the same person, whilst from verse 36 to the end of verse 39 we have the history of this extraordinary king himself. These last verses designate the Antichrist properly, and my opinion is, that from verse 21 to the end of verse 31, it is rather the king of the north, but who is also the type of Antichrist. I mention this, because many persons who have studied the chapter find great difficulty in deciding whether the history of the Antichrist begins at verse 21 or at verse 36. It is the same person from verse 21 to verse 35; and he was a type of Antichrist, even Antiochus Epiphanes.

The Spirit of God makes no mention of those who followed him; it was he who furnished the typical circumstances, and which necessarily therefore partially answered to the prophecy. But in verse 36 the Spirit speaks of the Antichrist himself, “the king shall do according to his will.” Before this, I judge, they are typical circumstances which apply to Antichrist.

I hope we understand, that although we are a part of the fourth monarchy (materially, not spiritually), these prophecies relate immediately and simply to the Jewish people—the people of Daniel in the latter days. The Antichrist is the link, between this history and ours; for it is the spirit of apostasy described in 2 Thessalonians,

which is the effective source of the conduct of this last king, here presented to us in his connection with the Jews in the east; but who, morally speaking, is allied with those who have abandoned Christianity, or the light now existing. Elsewhere he is found allied to the Jews at the beginning of his connection with them; afterwards he will deny them and set up himself as God.

May God preserve us from all trace or appearance of that spirit which will shew itself in these days in opposition, whether against the Almighty and Most High God, or against the Lord Jesus, the Prince of princes. May He keep us in humility of heart, giving our affections to the Lord Jesus! So shall we be safe. If we are content to be nothing and Jesus everything, we shall be guarded by Him, for Him, and for ever.

Lecture 8 Chapters 11:36 J 12:1, 2

We have already said something in general upon this king; we have spoken of him in connection with what went before; but independent of circumstances, as a personage, he is of importance sufficient that we should notice him more fully. It is generally admitted, that it is the same as is called Antichrist, the wicked one, but under a special character, as I mentioned towards the close of the last lecture (that is, in connection with the Jews, and in the land, which is an object of dispute between the king of the north, and the king of the south). And in fact, this wicked one will unite in his own person every feature of iniquity. He will be a blasphemer against the true God—a persecutor of the saints—the head of the apostasy; and he will encourage idolatry. In fine, it is “the king who shall do according to his will.”

It is impossible to mistake the character of the person mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2, “shewing himself that he is God.” And it would be well if we referred to a few passages, which mention the different characters attributed to him, beginning with this chapter of Daniel. The first trait is, that he is in Palestine, in the land of the heirs of the holy covenant, and exalts himself, and magnifies himself above every god, whether false or true. In spite of this he is to prosper “till the indignation be accomplished “: God permits it, because it is the time of His indignation against the Jews; chap. 8:19. This indignation is the period spoken of in Isaiah 10:5, 24,25: “For yet a very little while and the indignation shall cease.” There is an indignation with a certain limit. It is not said that the time of this king is the period of the indignation, but it is a time during which God does not interfere to deliver Israel. He allows the trial to go on, and Israel to suffer the effects of it; and so Antichrist prospers until the indignation is accomplished. It is not said that when the indignation is over, Israel will be re-established in the enjoyment of their promises; but Christ can then act for Israel instead of leaving them under the indignation. He will yet have to subject the nations to the exercise of His royal power, in the midst of His earthly people.

Verse 37. “Neither shall he regard the god of his fathers … for he shall magnify himself above all.” This is a strong feature of the pride of man; “he magnifies himself above all.” He would efface every idea of the true God; he is indifferent whether about the real religion of the heart, or the religion of his fathers; he dislikes even the name of Christ (called here “the desire of women”); he is even against religious customs, and religious nationality;

he has no respect for any god. But, arrived at this point, it is necessary to keep the people in restraint, and he needs instruments for this, as well as his gods, mahuzzim (fortresses)—some species of idolatry, which he introduces when he has denied every god. This idolatry will be connected with the interests of those who govern. He will cause them to rule over many (the many, the mass), viz., the people of Israel, and the country will be divided among his chiefs. So far the royal and Judaic history of this king.

We proceed with passages which represent him under other points of view. In chapter 7 he is seen as a little horn, not as king in Palestine, but as a particular horn of the fourth beast, and in the same chapter88 we also have the period determined for the end of the persection of the saints, “until the Ancient of days came” (v. 22), as distinct from the time when He sat upon the throne (v. 9). Thus Christ comes, and “the judgment is given to the saints of the most high,” or “of the high places,” and “the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” These passages determine the general end of the war which the little horn wages against the saints. In the last it is not said “the saints of the high places.” In fact three things are marked: viz., the coming of the Ancient of days; the judgment given to the saints of the high places; and the time when the saints shall take the kingdom.

We turn now to certain portions in the New Testament, which speak of this period and of the little horn under still other aspects, just as we may behold Christ under different aspects. In the epistle to the Thessalonians he is described as a chief, the result of the apostasy which shall invade Christendom; “Now we beseech you,

brethren, that ye be not soon shaken… except there come a falling away first," 2 Thess. 2:1-3.

The first thing is the apostasy, not of the Jews (this we have seen in Daniel), but of Christendom, and it will necessarily happen before the execution of the judgment —before the day of Christ; as must also the appearance of the "man of sin," who is clearly not the apostasy itself, but, I judge, follows and winds it up. The apostle marks the two events before the judgment: viz., the coming in of the apostasy, and the revelation of the man of sin—the son of perdition (an expression which signifies that he possesses this name, by his nature, his character, and his acts) "who opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God, or is worshipped." Read to verse 10.

This is his character in connection with Christendom, and Christendom in connection with him. First of all, there was a mystery of iniquity, which was commencing in the time of the apostles, which was to continue for a certain time, afterwards an apostasy would follow, and then the revelation of the wicked one.89 The Lord will destroy him "with the brightness of his coming" (the manifestation of His presence). But there is something else. The New Testament gives us the moral features of the appearance of this wicked one, viz., that it is according to the power of Satan j and what makes these verses remarkable is, that the same words which are used to describe the manifestations of this power of Satan are employed in speaking of the proof of the mission of Jesus Christ as Messiah; Acts 2:22.

There are two remarkable circumstances; viz., that the coming of Antichrist is spoken of just as the coming of Christ, one, a mystery of iniquity; the other, a mystery of

godliness. As the Son of man is to come, so also will the Antichrist come; and his coming will be after the power of Satan; he will perform lying miracles. It will not be merely a set of principles at work; the effect will be mighty in seducing those who perish. A positive power of error comes in, because men “received not the love of the truth.” “God shall send them strong delusion …” for they “had pleasure in unrighteousness.” It is a judicial blinding.

It is said also in Isaiah, “Make the heart of this people fat.” After a period of longsuffering on the part of God, blindness happened to the Jews, when they rejected the Messiah: and when patience has had its perfect work, they will yet be delivered over to a spirit of idolatry—that spirit which shall, meanwhile, have sought out seven spirits more wicked than himself, and the last state of that people shall be worse than the first. And so when those who call themselves Christians have obstinately refused to receive the truth, although it has been proposed to them, a positive and special blindness shall come upon them from God, “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth.”90 We continue our history of this king from Revelation 12. There the dragon is seen (who is the devil or Satan, and seduces the whole world) cast out of heaven, v. io, 12. This malicious power no longer occupies the heaveniy places, 91 but when this occurs, it will be a time of fearful woe to the earth. It is the beginning of his “great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

After this we have a vision of the woman, who “is nourished for a time, times, and half a time.” In other words, as soon as Satan is cast out of heaven, a period of three and a half years will elapse before he is judged

on earth. Accordingly, in chapter 13 we find that the dragon gives the beast his power, throne, and great authority—this beast, of whom we read in the same chapter that “power was given him to continue forty and two months.” He is found with the same characteristics as those before mentioned, only under more detailed historical circumstances. “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies,” v. 5. “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” Satan could no longer himself meddle with heaven, and therefore he sets on the beast against those who dwell there. Also “it was given unto him to make war with the saints (on the earth), and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations” (v. 6, 7).

There is a fact here worth observing—it is a kind of imitation of the ways of God. As the Father has given all power to the risen Son, and the Holy Spirit exercises all the power of Christ before Him; so Satan imitates the same thing in evil. The dragon will give his throne to the beast; and remark what is said of the character under which he will be worshipped, “And I saw one of his heads, as it were, wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed.” It is when this wound is healed, when there shall be a kind of resurrection (not personal, but the power of the beast raised up again), that all the world will wonder after the beast, and the second beast will exercise all the power of the first beast before him.

Revelation 13:11. “And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth” … which “causeth the earth and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed.” We have here a power

which pretends to be that of Christ (I do not say the heavenly power), but which pretends to be like Christ on the earth; but, in fact, an ear which could hear would discover it to be that of the dragon himself. As Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Only in the throne will I be greater than thou,” so this second beast will exercise all the power of the first beast before him—this second beast, which speaks like a dragon, whilst it has horns like a lamb. Verses 13,14: “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven … and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth.” These verses speak of what is done before (in the presence of) and in sustaining this power of the first beast; the second beast causes him to be worshipped, and an image to be made to him, and he seduces them that dwell on the earth.

This second beast is again mentioned in Revelation 19, under the designation of the false prophet. Here again, as the Spirit of the Father, speaking in the disciples, acted for the glory of Christ; so this beast, here called “the false prophet,” speaks the language of the dragon, and supports the glory of the last beast. It will be a spirit zealous for idolatry, and who will even execute judgment on the earth, as the prophets ere now have done.

In the Revelation we find the connection of the beast with Babylon, which is yet another thing. In chapter 17:1, 3, it is said, “I will shew thee the judgment of the great whore.” “And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast … having seven heads and ten horns.” “The beast which thou sawest was, and is not … yet is” (v. 8). This is a kind of death and resurrection. When it appears for the last time, it has a devilish character, it comes out of the pit, and then is destroyed. “And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder … when they

behold the beast that was and is not, and yet is" (or rather, "and shall be there"). It is a coming92 of this beast. When the world beholds this appearance of the beast, it is astonished. There is another circumstance, "And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth [king] and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (v. 11, 12). It is an event which has not yet occurred.

We perceive that these kings will exist at the same time with the beast. Three of them will fall (see Dan. 7), but the seven others will continue. The beast rules and unites in a single body the power of these kings, but the kings exist; it will be a kind of confederation, in which each horn acts royally in his own sphere, but gives his power to the beast, who blasphemes against God. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled," Rev. 17:17.

Another feature in his character is, "that the ten horns … shall hate the whore" (v. 16), who for a long while ruled the beast. We remember in Daniel 7 that among the ten horns another arose, who got all the power of the beast, who in fact morally becomes the beast, and causes three of the horns to fall before him. This one in the eyes of Daniel, and in fact in his conduct, will be the beast. This horn will control and give its tone to everything. Having touched upon the passages which refer to this same personage, we must still remember that it is in Palestine, and viewed personally, that we have to do with him here.

But to continue with Daniel 11. “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him … he shall enter also into the glorious land” (v. 40, 41). This is the moment when God begins to act. Both the kings of the north and south, in their same geographical position, are at war with this king. “And the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind.” This king of the north seems to be a very prominent power, which possesses the territory of the ancient kings of Syria. My judgment is, that the rest of the chapter applies to him, although formerly I thought it applied to the king. Daniel now continues the thread of this history (which had been interrupted by the notices concerning the king); that is, he resumes that of the Jews in connection with the kings of the north and south. And there is a fact which confirms me in the opinion of this invasion (v. 41) being that of the king of the north; namely, “he shall enter into the glorious land.” Now if it is a question of “the king,” he is already there.

Verse 41. “And many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” This is a circumstance not to be omitted, because it demonstrates the exactitude of the written word. For in Isaiah 11:14 you will find that these three powers which escape the king of the north, are in existence still later: “Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim, but they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west … they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them.” Verse 42. “He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape” —an

announcement that the king of the south loses his kingdom. See Isaiah 11:15.

Verses 43, 44. “But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt… But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him, therefore he shall go forth with great fury … yet he shall come to his end and none shall help him.” This is the end of the king of the north.

I add a general idea of chapter 12 to shew the connection. Verse 1. “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” Here is special reference to the Jews, in whom Daniel was so much interested, and on whose account he had fasted and mourned for three full weeks. After having described the events pertaining to the kings of the north and south, the angel says, notwithstanding all these desolating scenes, Michael shall stand up for the children of thy people. Nevertheless, “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” This is exactly what is announced in Matthew 24 as to take place in Judea. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet” etc. (v. 15-21). It is clear that this cannot happen twice. It is the time of Israel’s deliverance “and at that time, thy people shall be delivered”: only it is confined to “every one that is found written in the book.”

One could not fail to remark, while reading the chapters of which I have given the abridgment in the two preceding lectures, the character of this terrible personage of the last days. The king of the north is fearful enough as a conqueror and pillaging invader; but

this king is spoken of as making war against God. It is not merely a desire of conquest, but of open opposition to God and the Lamb. It is the effectual power of Satan and of a lie; it is blasphemy; it is persecution. One feels it to be everything the most terrible in human hatred, animated by the power of Satan fallen from heaven, and who establishes his throne upon earth against the God of heaven and the Lamb. The appearing of this wicked one is the most important point in these chapters, whether as the expression of the iniquity of the Jews and Christendom, or as that of the pride of man.

Lecture 9 Chapter 12:2-13

In reading this chapter, one is struck with the particular character of the book, and more especially with the care which God evinces to comfort, or rather to shew the most entire sympathy with, the remnant in the afflicting circumstances in which they are found. It is certain that Daniel still remained in captivity at Babylon (which, indeed, it appears he never left) when the remnant had returned to Jerusalem. So that typically he far more represents the state of the people in captivity under the Gentiles, than the prophet of the people when God was acknowledging them.93 It is quite true that the remnant will escape at last, but this Daniel saw afar off. He represents specially the suffering remnant, and the sympathies of God with them. We find in other prophets, as Isaiah and Zechariah, magnificent promises for this remnant, to whom the Lord will reveal Himself, when Christ has appeared. He shall make “the house of Judah as his goodly horse in the battle,” and “he that is feeble among them shall be as David,” Zech. 10:3; chap. 12:8. There we see the power of God in manifestation among

the people at Jerusalem; but it is not so in Daniel. The last thing we see here relative to Jerusalem is that the king of the north “plants his tabernacles in the glorious holy mountain.” There is no detail in this book of the subsequent full and remarkable deliverance; but it is rather occupied with the Jewish remnant in the land, beaten by the tempest of the Gentile monarchies. On the other hand, there is still the sympathy of God with them, but He is not with His people after an evident manner (for they are still in captivity); and it is rather an intervention of Providence in a hidden way which delivers and secures in the midst of trials and difficulties. Compare Psalm 44:10,11, where this state of things is described.

Daniel 12:1. “And at that time shall Michael stand up,” etc. He appears to be the prince of the angels, or the archangel. It is a custom to speak of archangels, but the word of God mentions only one, the chief of the angels. I am silent as to who it is, because the Scripture is; but however this may be, the intervention is a providential angelic one. Michael is there in relationship with the people of Israel. By this passage we learn who it is that will stand for the children of Daniel’s people, as well as the excellency of this angelic power which God in His providence employs— “who standeth for the children of thy people.” It is a time of trouble, as we have seen, and herein consists the difference of God’s acting, as I have just considered it. There is now a providence of God which is a concealed government; but hereafter there will be a manifest and public rule by Christ, when everything will appear—a government direct from God. There is now a government of arrangement, by which all things are made to “work together for good to them that

love God," and for the accomplishment of His purposes; but this action is usually a concealed one. In Esther we have a remarkable instance. The name of God is not found in the book; the Spirit has wished to shew that, whilst the Jews were in captivity, God had His eyes upon them, but that He acted in a hidden manner and would not name Himself in their midst.

In the time of Michael it will be a time of distress. This is the second thought in the chapter, and it is the same in Jeremiah 30:7. There could be but one such time—none is to be like it: "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? "Joel 2:11. Nevertheless it is the day of deliverance for Israel: "Strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king [Christ] … but I will not leave thee altogether unpunished," Jer. 30:8, 9, 11. These promises have evidently never yet had their fulfilment, for it will be a final deliverance.

The same time is alluded to in Matthew 24:21. "For there shall be great tribulation … and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved," etc. This is the terrible distress which is to come upon Israel at the last. Consult also Mark 13:19 for the same account. It all occurs at Jerusalem, where the abomination of desolation will be set up, or in its vicinity. In Luke 21:22, 24, there is a certain difference, as we shall see presently.

Daniel 12:1. "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." These are the elect. The days are shortened on their account, otherwise no flesh would be saved. Jerusalem would have been as Sodom or as Gomorrah, except the Lord

had left a very small remnant; Isaiah 1; Rom. 9. Verse 2. “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.” The angel, as it appears to me, speaks in this place of the deliverance of the people brought back from among the Gentiles. “Many of them,” etc.; it is only a question of the people of Daniel.94 No doubt judgments will fall upon the Gentiles, but in speaking of those with whom God is more immediately occupied as the object of His thoughts, the people of Daniel only are intended. I recall to your minds Daniel 10:14, “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.” The fulfilment of this declaration is taken up in chapters 10, 11, 12. “Many of them which sleep” (namely, a multitude of Jews in general, but not all) will appear on the scene; as for some, it will be “to everlasting life,” and as to others, “to shame and everlasting contempt.”

The expression “dust of the earth “is common in the writings of the prophets, when a person is in captivity and overwhelmed, as in Isaiah 26:14. In pronouncing judgment upon the nations, the prophet says, “They are dead [those who despised the Jews, “other lords besides thee have had dominion over us “], they are deceased … therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish.” But in verse 19, speaking of the Jews, “thy dead men shall live; [together with] my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead.” Here is the resurrection of the Jews. “Come, my people, enter into thy chambers … hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” This same

indignation of which we have been speaking in verse 21. “For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth.”

God had been, so to speak, concealed; He had allowed the evil to go on: but, dear friends, what a thought! Think of God coming out of His place! When we consider our inability to make head against wickedness—how Christians tremble at the sight of the increase of evil, hardly knowing what to do; while they see, on the one hand, the proud self-will of man, and on the other, this unexpected and inexplicable tendency to superstition—the powers of darkness under this form having invaded even countries which were delivered from it, and who are trembling at it; I say, then, it is precious in face of all this to know that God will come out of His place. True, it will be in anger for the moment—in anger against the wickedness, and to put it away; but also that good may be before His face, and before our eyes who are fatigued with what we behold. On this account we can bear the idea of judgment, and even cry “How long!” And O how happy to think of an indignation which will change active evil into rest, blessing, peace, liberty, and freedom from the yoke of sin, as soon as the Lord Jesus shall have executed His judgment! We are not now speaking of the church (although this is the most precious part) but of the poor world labouring under the yoke of Satan. For even when good has been effected, evil gains ground on all sides.

The apostle could well say “The whole creation groaneth,” etc. We understand—we who know the secret of the goodness of God—that it groans. “Ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit” must “groan within ourselves,” unless we should withdraw ourselves

from the love of God, and from the groanings of the Spirit within us. And the more we observe the progress of evil, the more we shall feel the need of this indignation of God that His power may be felt in executing judgment in this world. And if faith is strong in our hearts, it will engage us in helping out, by the activity of love, all those we can, from this necessary judgment, whether this fearful act is likely to fall on them owing to the natural energy of sin in their hearts, or from the superstitions and errors to which they are attached by education; for it will fall upon whatever seduces the heart, as it is said, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins,” etc. (Rev. 18). We see then that it is judgment which will take away the power of evil, and for this it is that the appeal is made to the saints, etc., in the Apocalypse, to rejoice in the destruction of Babylon. It will be a terrible judgment; but until it happens, a poison or venom corrupts everything, even when one’s own self is withdrawn from it.

I have been led into this digression, on the subject of the judgment of God, on account of the ending of Isaiah 26, which I quoted, and to explain the application of the resurrection to the Jewish people. I will mention another passage in Ezekiel 37—that of the dry bones—which will help you to understand this point. It is often quoted as having reference to souls; and morally, no doubt, the same effect happens to those who are quickened of God; but the only subject of the chapter is the nation of Israel, and not at all souls. “Son of man (v. 11), these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say [in captivity], Our bones are dried.” This is not what dead souls say; “therefore (v. 12) prophesy … thus saith the Lord God,

Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." The Israelites, when they return, are treated as if they had been buried among the nations. "Then shall ye know that I am the Lord." It would be sad to remain there in the land, if it were a literal resurrection; for the hope of those who are literally raised is far higher.

The prophet continues with the history of the two sticks, Judah and Israel, which are to become one, when "one king shall be king to them all," Ezek. 37:22. Nothing can be clearer than that the subject of the chapter is the deliverance and blessing of Israel by Jesus Christ. Daniel 12 also treats of Israel coming out of the graves—buried among the Gentiles; but it omits the final result under Christ. Many, it says, shall awake (not all), and of these some shall be for everlasting contempt, as some will be for eternal life. This part is added, as I said before, because the main concern of the prophecy was with the holy land and the Jews residing there. Other Jews will be manifested in the actual times before the final deliverance of Israel; and the Spirit of God, consequently, speaks of those latter in this passage.

The contents of these first verses apply in their results to the Jewish remnant, whose deliverance terminates that time of distress during which Michael stood for it, and delineates all that takes place during that period. It is the deliverance of the remnant and that of the people —all those written in the book.

But besides, among those who are delivered will be some who will be in the front of the battle, as being occupied with the things of God, and who will discern

the times. Thus, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” If you have paid attention to the preceding chapter, you will recognise these wise ones: they are a remnant who have been often mentioned; as in chapter ii:35, “and some of them of understanding,” etc.: verse 33 also, “they that understand,” Maskilim. It will be an enlightened remnant—persons who will discern the times, and who will occupy themselves with the welfare of the mass of the people, and that faithfully, according to the light they will possess. “And they that turn [the] many to righteousness” [or rather, “instructed the many in righteousness,” this was the object of their labours]. There is no thought about evangelising, nor of those who are blessed through evangelising. The prophet is speaking solely of those Jews who shall be engaged in the instruction of the mass of the people, with a view of withdrawing them from the deceitful ways of Antichrist, and from all the evil which he will carry on. Those who have thus laboured among the many will “shine as the stars for ever and ever.” This special remnant is mentioned, as before said, in Isaiah 65, and 66.95 These are the closing circumstances of the remnant: viz., this time of distress; the people delivered, that is, the remnant; many who were buried, as it were, among the nations, who shall awake, whether for good or evil; and the special lot of the understanding ones. There is still, at the end of the chapter, the reply to the question of Daniel as to the duration of these things, of which the solution, for the Jews, was concealed until the time of the end.

We are in the time of the end, for it is to be hoped that all will soon finish; but, in another sense, the church is always in the time of the end, because the church does not belong to the present age, as it is said, 1 John 2:18, “As ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” Now, seeing this, “they that be wise” will apply morally to the church, so far as she preserves the place which the word of God gives her, although she is not the direct object of the prophecy. The church is supposed to know that the last days are arrived, and that the prophetic warnings are important, in order that that day overtake us not as a thief; for to be overtaken is not the proper portion of the church. (Compare 1 Thess. 5:4, etc., and Rev. 3:3.) And hence also in the Revelation (feeble as we are in the comprehension of it) it is written, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.” What is said to Daniel is exactly the reverse of the position of the church, which, having an unction from the Holy One, knows all things; but in Daniel it is said, “shut up the words and seal the book till the time of the end.”

Verses 7, 9, 10, “And when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. And I heard, but I understood not… And he said… the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end… but the wise shall understand.” Now, so to speak, the church is the faithful remnant; for the church commenced with the understanding remnant of the Jews; such was its beginning. Thus in the Revelation one is encouraged to hear and to keep the words of the book, and intelligence96 is supposed among Christians. Verse 11: “And from the time that the

daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be twelve hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thirteen hundred and thirty five days." There is something striking in this answer as concerns the Jews. The Lord Jesus uses the same date, omitting these days added at the end; otherwise He gives the same point of departure. The date does not begin until the last half-week; because until then there is no event to furnish an epoch from which one can commence counting, the position being then also definite and decided. I judge that in the Revelation there is a previous half-week, during which there will be a peculiar testimony at Jerusalem; but that which notably fixes the time of distress to the Jews (and this is the subject before us) is the abomination of desolation set up in the holy place at Jerusalem; and this is at the beginning of the last half-week. See note page 32.

This being the principal thing, I doubt whether there is any date whatever in the word as to the general course of the prophecy, or for the time which elapses between the rejection of Jesus and His return. That there may have been events adapted to the prophetic farts—analogous in principle—during the interval, I do not doubt; and events most important to recognise in their moral features. Many eminent Christians have sought to calculate these dates, but my conviction is that all these will be found wrong in the fact. Some have indicated 1844, and some 1847; I have made them myself in my time. It is not, then, to blame others, that I say I do not think there is any basis for a true calculation; and I doubt whether the Lord has fixed any other date, than

that of the half-week of Daniel, when the abomination of desolation is set up.

The prophecy speaks of seventy weeks, but almost all Christians allow that these have passed, except the seventieth one, and that at the end of the sixty-ninth the Lord was upon earth. Moreover the date, of a time, times, and half a time, has reference entirely to Jerusalem; and it is not a period of years at all, but simply of days. For this date is given us at the end of the chapter, after the sacrifice has been taken away, and after the setting up of the abomination. Now the words of the Lord Himself afford a complete proof that it has no reference to centuries any more than to Christendom: for He speaks of a special time—of certain persons in peculiar circumstances interested in and occupied with what occurs at Jerusalem—of women with child—of the time which it takes to flee to the mountains —of the season of the year suiting that flight—and of the sabbath-day. Neither could we suppose that there would be signs in the sun, etc., etc., during centuries. It is of these things that Matthew 24 speaks, as being identified with “the twelve hundred and sixty days,” and “a time, times, and half a time.”

I will just recall to your memories my previous division of Matthew 24. We must keep in mind the occasion of the reply of our Lord to His disciples. He had passed judgment on the Jewish people at the end of chapter 23. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, etc. … for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Here is a positive judgment passed, and upon the nation as such. There is no question of individuals, for He does not say to individuals “ye shall not see me.”

And so it must be the nation, or a remnant of it at least, and at a time yet to come, who will say to Jesus, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” The high priests themselves have never said it; on the contrary, their language was, “Away with him, crucify him.” The Lord had previously pronounced their judgment; but it is of the nation that He says, “Ye shall not see me henceforth until,” etc. It is a quotation from Psalm 118 remarkable for its prophetic announcement of the rejection of Him who was to be acknowledged at a later time.

Then Matthew 24:1, etc., “And Jesus went out and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple”, for they were yet imbued with a Jewish feeling. Verse 3: “And the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world” (age)? They supposed that what the Lord had said about the temple would take place when the Messiah should return; and they asked when these things should happen. Observe the expression “end of the age.” When the Lord uses it, He does not speak of Christianity, which was not then established. When His disciples said “the age,” they had no thought about Christianity; they spoke about the Jewish age, in which the Messiah was expected; the age of the law until the Messiah should come for the Jews. Their question was, When shall the end of that age be?

Now from verses 4-14 Jesus tells them the circumstances which should take place: these are warnings. And He adds some circumstances which should happen before “the end of the age.” That is to say, He closes the account of the Jewish remnant which

should endure to the end. At verse 14 Jesus details another event: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world … and then shall the end come”; that is, not only certain things should happen to His disciples, but also, there should be the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, throughout the habitable world, and then should the end come.

Then He commences His particular instructions to His disciples who should be at Jerusalem at “the end of the age.” As He had spoken of the Jewish nation, so here He speaks to His disciples, addressing, in their persons, the remnant which should be found at the end. “When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination … stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Nothing can be more evident than that the Lord speaks of a precise time, and not of something which happens morally, and which may be distributed, so to speak, over centuries. Thus, “neither let him which is in the field” … “woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck,” etc. “Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.” It is impossible not to perceive that the last allusion is to Jews who would not venture to go further than a certain distance on the sabbath-day.

Verse 21. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” We are here absolutely in the time of distress (predicted in Dan. 12 and Jer. 30:7) at Jerusalem, to be followed by the deliverance of the people of Daniel, at least of the remnant, and by the establishment of the Jews in Palestine with David (Christ) as their king. But before this unequalled period of tribulation there will be “the beginning of sorrows,”

Matt. 24:8. And whenever the abomination is placed, there will be twelve hundred and ninety days, with forty-five added, before there is a complete deliverance at Jerusalem. The forty-five days added will introduce all that the faithful remnant could desire in order to their happiness. Mark agrees with all this. They both pursue the history until the manifestation of Jesus. “Then if” any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, there, believe it not,97 for there shall arise false Christs… For as the lightning [v. 27] cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.; for wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” There where the dead body of the Jewish people is, the visitation of God will come.

“What shall be the sign of thy coming?” The nation will have no sign for its instruction, although fearful signs will be there. This is the answer to the nation: Christ shall come as the lightning. In heaven only there will be a sign; I do not say what the sign is, but there will be one there when He comes. “They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” Matt. 24:30.

I will add a few remarks as to Luke 21. There is a difference, for Luke does not occupy himself in the same manner with Jewish details. It is not the gospel of the Jewish kingdom. The only question of the disciples is, “When shall these things be?” It is not about the “end of the age.” It applies only to that which should happen at the destruction of Jerusalem. When Titus took it, more or less of those fearful events took place, similar to what will happen at the end; but it is not the same thing as

the time “such as never was.” There will be great earthquakes, etc. Read down to verse 10.

In Luke’s gospel there is more reference to evangelising in a direct manner, although the result as to testimony is the same: “ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.” “In your patience possess ye your souls.” But there is not a word about the abomination of desolation. “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.” And this was accomplished in the siege of Jerusalem, which has already taken place, as history testifies. Possibly there may be similar features when the nations shall surround Jerusalem; but no mention is made of a time of distress such as never was. All that is said is, “There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people”; and they “shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.” This is altogether another matter. There is no account of any deliverance of the Jews. It is not said “Blessed is he… that cometh to the thirteen hundred and thirty-five days”; but on the contrary, Jerusalem is trodden down until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Things are left in this state by the recital, the events in it being applicable down to the end, but accomplished in the desolation of Jerusalem by Titus. Verse 25: “And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon.” Generally speaking, Luke does not answer to the exact accomplishment of the prophecies of Daniel, but principally to those whose fulfilment is now passed, and which Jesus set forth to His disciples to influence their conduct according to their particular question (v. 7); and the signs which he gives (v. 24, 25) are

applicable rather to the Gentiles, than to Jerusalem and the Jews.

But to conclude with Daniel 12:7. “It shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” This is another proof that the date relates to the end, for it is evident that he has not accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people. “And I heard, but I understood not.”

We are not to conceive of the “end of the indignation,” as if it were the complete and entire re-establishment of the Jews in all their privileges. When the indignation is over, then the Christ—God—and Christ in the name of God, takes Israel as His people to begin to establish them fully. The Jews having again become the people of God, He begins to put them into the enjoyment of all their privileges; and Christ begins to appropriate Himself His rights as Messiah.

“None of the wicked shall understand” (v. 10). It will be the same in the Christian apostasy. “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a he.” “But the wise shall understand.” “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away … there shall be twelve hundred and ninety days.” I have no knowledge why there should be the addition of these thirty days to twelve hundred and sixty days, unless it be an indication that after the end of the half-week, during which the Antichrist prospers, there will yet be needed thirty days before the final blessing to the Jews comes in. “Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thirteen hundred and thirty-five days” —for then the people will evidently be in a state of blessing. But, as I before said, Daniel

gives no explanation or detail of this happiness; because the aim of the book is to shew the care which God takes of the remnant during the time of its sojourn (and this was Daniel's case) among the Gentiles. Other prophecies speak of their happy position after their re-settlement; but Daniel limits himself to the expression that they shall be blessed.

"But go thou thy way … and thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Thou shalt enjoy all this blessedness, be not troubled; God will take care of this, thou shalt have thy part in it all. We know that it is at the first resurrection— the resurrection of the saints— that Daniel will partake of this in company with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all those who have been faithful in every epoch. We have now arrived at the conclusion of this remarkable book. I have not pretended to give you anything more than its great features, such as God has up to this shewn to me. By their help you may be enabled to proceed farther for yourselves. May God bless His word.

60 It is suggested that before reading these Studies in Daniel the paper "Enquiry as to the Antichrist of Prophecy," appearing later in this volume, should be read.—Ed.

61 It is under this character of "God of heaven "that Daniel knew Him. He will be found afterwards God of the earth in fact, as He is always in right.

62 I am not speaking of the truth which allies the conscience to God Himself, and therefore gives Him His proper supremacy.

63 Compare Habakkuk, whose prophecy is a kind of commentary on these two chapters.

64 Daniel is, in many ways, a type of Christ, as having the Spirit of Christ in his sympathies with the remnant, and as being their representative before God.

65 There is no doubt, I believe, that “placed “or “set “is the true, the only true sense.

66 I use the word “church “here in a popular and improper sense.

67 The change from “it” to “he” is to be noted here. It does not agree immediately with the little horn.

68 This word in the original gives the idea of something solid, permanent, established; and comes from a word meaning “to establish.”

69 Where, in verse 12, it is said, “an host was given him,” I take the word in the sense in which it is used in Job 7:1; 14:14; and perhaps chap. 10:17—an appointed time of distress, a miserable condition which is ordained to any one.

70 I would remark here in passing, that we must not conclude that all the circumstances connected with the occasion of a prophecy apply to the events which accomplish it at the end of the age.

71 Or people of the saints. (Compare chapter 7:27.)

72 When I speak of this spirit of prophecy, I mean, not a revelation, but the intelligence of the thoughts of God as to His people, and interest of heart in their blessing, as in God’s behalf—the heart being the depository of these interests. This spirit is in the body. (Compare, too, Genesis 20:7.)

73 See also Zephaniah 3:17.

74 The book of Esther is a striking instance of the secret government of God, at a time when He could not recognise His people publicly; and I judge this to be the reason why God does not permit His name to appear throughout the book. If He had been named. He would not, so to speak, have permitted Esther to remain the wife of Ahasuerus.

75 I read, “and shall have nothing,” i.e., shall have nothing of His dominion as Messiah.

76 The Hebrew has the article.

77 Properly speaking, Matthew 24 and Mark 13 only take account of the last half of this week; for the first half is a time of testimony and belongs to the period of the beginning of sorrows and of testimony in general, and of the labours mentioned previously to Matthew 24:14.

78 He supposes the continuation of their testimony (which will be stopped, at least at Jerusalem, when “the abomination of desolation” shall be set up there), omitting the whole period and the testimony properly called Christian.

79 I would reserve here, as before, a question arising in my mind as to the first and second beasts of the Revelation, as well as the wilful king of chapter n of this book. See pages 215-224.

80 You will find this same date of twelve hundred and sixty days repeated several times: as with regard to the little horn (chap. 7), also to the beast of the Apocalypse (Rev. 13), and in Daniel 12 with thirty days added, as to the abomination of desolation.

81 [There are various statements here which the author would now modify, chiefly as to the distinction of the Antichrist from the Roman imperial chief, and as to the time of the two witnesses. See pages 215-224 and footnote page 32.—Ed.]

82 Ibid.

83 If “shall rise or come from him” be interpreted as of a power who shall take his (the king of the north’s) place, this would no longer be the case.

84 The passages found with the article are chapters 9:27; 11:33, 39; 12:3. In chapters 11:34, 44 and 12:4, 10, it is not so.

85 De Wette, a good German translator, applies it to the Maskilim.

86 We remarked on chapter 11:31, that in taking the Hebrew words “mimmenu yamedu,” in the sense of forces sent on his part, this king will actually be at this time in the territory noted as that of the king of the north.

87 The question relative to the two beasts of Revelation 13, would again recur here.

88 I have before noticed the question which arises to my mind here.

89 There is much mention made of this wicked one in the Psalms, principally in his relation to the Jews.

90 Man under the light of creation (Romans 1), the Jews (Isaiah 6), and Christendom (2 Thessalonians 2), arrive at the same end.

91 This power in heavenly places (Eph. 6), against which we now wrestle, is consequently no longer there.

92 All the best editions of the Greek Testament employ here the word elsewhere used for the “coming” of Christ.

93 It is worthy of remark that, in the prophets of the first captivity God by the Spirit never calls Israel “my people.” He declares they shall be, and the Spirit remains among them as when they came up out of Egypt; but “Lo-ammi “remains unrecalled.

94 It seems to me that these words are added to complete the picture; for the principal part of the prophecy is occupied with the details of that part of the people who are found in the land when the wicked one shall be in the exercise of his terrible and malicious power. But in this verse the lot of those who had been lost, and were to be gathered from among the nations, is given to us. These only enter as accessory into the scheme of the prophecy (this portion of the people having been without the limits of the prophecy, not having entered into the land to figure as the Jewish people). It is for this reason that they are represented as “sleeping in the dust of the earth.”

95 Some little doubt has been thrown on my mind as to this.

96 We must distinguish between the intelligence, and the application to oneself of these prophecies, whatever the application may be. What was revealed to Abraham concerned Lot.

97 This, to me, is a convincing proof that the passage does not apply, properly speaking, to the church; because our expectation is to be caught up into the air to meet Jesus. To tell us He is in the desert would itself

prove an impostor; for we are to be in the air with Him before He can be there.

Remarks On A Part Of Daniel

Editor's Note98

My Dear Brother,

I send you some remarks on an interesting part of prophecy, including some principles long ago remarked, and recalled by recent study of some parts of Daniel. I shall be short, my object being to throw out the grounds of judgment rather than to reason on them. It has been long my conviction that there are two very distinct parties engaged in the trials of Jerusalem in the latter day. The alliance of Jerusalem with the one is the chief occasion of the desolation brought on by the other. This other is habitually termed the Assyrian in Isaiah. I now proceed to give you the elements of certain passages which seem to me to throw light on these points, and to facilitate the understanding of Daniel.

First, the indignation, see Isaiah 10: we have the revelation that the rod in the hand of the Assyrian is the Lord’s indignation. This indignation is to cease in the destruction of the Assyrian. The characteristic term for this closing period is the indignation of Jehovah against the nation. We find, in Daniel 8:19, the expositor, who tells Daniel that he will make him know what is in the last end of the indignation, for at the time appointed the end shall be. The wilful king prospers till this indignation is filled up. When the overflowing scourge (Isaiah 28), which is a flood and a treading down (compare Daniel 9:27 and 8:13), comes through Ephraim (that is from the north), the scornful men which dwell at Jerusalem have made a covenant with death and are at agreement with hell, and hence hope to escape the

overflowing scourge. But, as there is a foundation-stone for faith, so judgment is laid to the line, and the overflowing scourge passes through and they are trodden down by it. We have then the period of the indignation and the special instrument of it (this attack of the Assyrian being repeatedly referred to in Isaiah, compare Psalm 83). We have also the fact, that, when the scourge of desolation passes through, the rulers at Jerusalem had made an agreement with death and hell to avoid it; but the overflowing scourge sweeps on.

The distinction we have at the close of Isaiah 30, where it seems to me the king is a distinct personage (Heb. gam hoo lammelek), “Topheth is prepared of old, for the king also it is prepared.” These passages lead me to another expression of importance in this respect, and which also links together Daniel and these passages in Isaiah (Heb. chalah veneheratsah) the consumption decreed. You will find this in Isaiah 10:23 (and something like it in verse 22) in connection with the indignation, and the Assyrian, and a very small remnant left of Israel from the judgment, but a determined one of God. In Isaiah 28 the judgment is clearly on Israel. Coming, as I have said, as to its progress through Ephraim, it finds the rulers of Jerusalem in league with death; and they are warned (v. 22) not to be mockers, because (Heb. chalah veneheratsah) a consumption is determined on the whole earth (land).

In Daniel 9:27, we find the same expression translated “the consummation,” and that determined. I apprehend the force is “for the overspreading of abominations [the protection of idols, which makes the great charge against the Jews of the latter day a desolator (m’shomehm)] there shall be a desolator, until the

consumption decreed be poured on the desolate"; that is, the "overspreading of abominations" (al c'maph shikkutsim), whatever that may be taken to be, is the cause why the consumption decreed is poured on the desolate. Some take it as a fact, or prefer the margin. As I take the sense of the English translation to be just, I venture on Hebrew ground, but only to put questions. I suppose the Hebrew may mean "because," or "for," as in English. Next, is it not certain, according to the points, and the regular Hebrew construction, both from letters and accents, that it is because of the protection of idols; and that the idols of the desolator is not the connection in the Hebrew? The best translation I have access to concurs in this. If so, the sense, as it seems to me to be, is clear, namely, "because of the protection of idols [there shall be] a desolator, until the consumption decreed" —this appointed measure of wrath (against Israel).

I think the reading of the passages quoted, in Isaiah, shews plainly that the decreed consuming or accomplishment of judgment applies to Israel, and such a statement accords with the whole testimony of God's word on the subject. This confirms the English translation "on the desolate." And here again I appeal to my Hebrew friends. The usual sense of the Hebrew words (shamehm and shomehm) is, I apprehend, "to be desolate." The word used here (shomehm) is several times used for Jerusalem desolate, by Jeremiah in Lamentations, and in other parts of Scripture, as to it and other subjects.99 No case of the active use is alleged by Gesenius, but this passage, which proves of course nothing, and Daniel 12:11, which rests on a similar basis, and chapter 8:13, all involve the question

to be decided. For either of the last two cases, “desolate” or “desolating” gives a sense according to truth; but would in any case (shomehm) be “causing others to desolate”? However, of this in a moment. The use of an unusual form (Ezek. 36:3) is the only other authority. Bagster’s Lexicon does not give this sense. However this may be, there is no doubt that the common use of the word elsewhere is “desolate,” and that the other expressions are usually applied to Jerusalem. The consumption decreed is poured upon the desolate. Until then there will be a desolator. Thus we should have the declaration that he (the prince to come) confirms covenant with the many (the body of the Jews) one week; and in the midst of the week he will cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and because of the overspreading or protection of idols there will be a desolator, until the consumption decreed be poured on the desolate—until God has filled up his judgment. Now a few words on the question of the desolate; chap. 11:31. It is a different word, the abomination of desolation (ra’shomehm) the word translated (chap. 9:27) “he shall make it desolate” —rather a desolator; they shall plant the abomination of the desolator. This seems admitted by the common authorities I have recourse to. It inclines me much to think that this passage refers much more distinctly to Antiochus than to the latter days (v. 32). “Do exploits “does not seem to me to characterise that epoch. As to chapter 8:13, I leave this question, whether it is not the transgression of the desolate; when the transgressors are come to the full, transgressions against the daily sacrifice. It is clear in either case, that this causes desolation, so that I have nothing to oppose; but I would arrive at the force of the

word. It is not, at any rate, an active desolator, I should think, in a positive way—as m'shomehm.

The existence of the latter word in chapter 11:31 makes chapter 12:11 more interesting. There, and there alone, we have "the abomination that desolates" (Heb. shikkuts shomehm); and to that, I apprehend, the Lord's solemn words specially refer as to the last days. I can hardly think that the Spirit uses in chapter 9:27 the two words as He does to mean the same thing. If the difference in chapter 11:31 and chapter 12:11 be just, it throws vast light on the interpretation of the whole passage. Whatever may be the result as to the critical point, the connection of the two chapters of Isaiah (and others bear on it, particularly all from chapter 28 to the end of chapter 35) throws much light on the solemn scenes of the history of Israel and the world in the last days.

I just add here, that besides the evident division at the end of Daniel 6, between the historic scenes or dreams of others interpreted by Daniel, and the communications made to Daniel himself, there is a distinction to be made between chapters 7 and 8 (which have a common character) and chapter 9 to the end.

Chapters 7 and 8 are communications made to Daniel of certain events during the power of evil (the Jews being in no way delivered) and give us the two horns and their bearing on the history of those beloved of God, whatever their condition. But all this is seen as a picture, though a picture explained— a picture of the power of evil.

In the last four chapters, which date subsequent to the overthrow of Babylon, Daniel, according to the mind of God, is brought forward as intercessionally interested in Israel, and he pleads for guilty Israel, as Moses of old—

differently as to tone, but presenting, by faith in God's own thoughts, the people, as His people, whatever their state may have been (and that is the character of faith, while fully, for the very same reason, owning and confessing the sin). The result is remarkably analogous as to this. The angel who speaks on the Lord's behalf calls Israel Daniel's people, and the city his city, as the Lord did to Moses. Daniel sees no vision here of historical wonders, but of the person interested in Israel, who communicates to him Israel's history in reply to his faith in God and love to Israel, as the man greatly beloved. Chapter 9 seems to me to refer rather to chapter 7 and chapters 10, 11, and 12 to chapter 8; the former to the western, and the latter to the eastern, subjects of prophecy. I believe these considerations will assist in the intelligence of the book, the latter remarks opening considerably the bearing of the two subdivisions. The explanation of chapter 7 is not in terms confined to the end of the indignation, as that of chapter 8 (though the special actings of the little horn are identified with the periods of chapter 12).

98 [Here follow a number of pieces on prophetic subjects somewhat later than several discussions of great length and of a more controversial character which will form a volume of themselves.—Ed.]

99 See Isaiah 54:1; Lamentations 1:13 and 3:11.

Enquiry As To The Antichrist Of Prophecy

January 1849.

My dear Brother,

I beg to send you a series of remarks, which have gradually been assuming importance in my mind for now three or four years, though I still present them only in the shape of enquiry, and shall be glad and thankful to receive the communication of any remarks, or the suggestion of any difficulties (many having presented themselves to myself in the period I speak of).

All who look for a personal Antichrist have been accustomed to assume that he is the head of the Roman empire, in whose hand imperial power will be and the throne of the world. Of this I much doubt. I have no doubt there will be this blasphemous power, the object of universal admiration. The Scriptures seem to me to contain a plain revelation of this. The belief of it, therefore, remains of course unshaken in my mind. The question is, Is this power the Antichrist? The outline of the state of things, I would remark therefore, remains unaltered; and I am glad to add this, because it is important that, while open to correction on account of our imperfection, ascertained truth should maintain its weight and authority: as a moral state of the soul this is important. I have often seen “the putting always everything in question” presented as sincerity and the love of truth. Whereas it is merely the haughtiest pretension of the human mind, which would hold its unshackled despotism to displace everything at

pleasure, and make its own thoughts creatures of its will; while love of truth is seen in holding and being subject to known truth, in which we are taught of God, and, as subject to it, not departing from it. But, of course, even where known, we may be imperfect in our apprehension of it. I repeat, then, I see nothing to change in general, though doubtless much to learn, in the belief of this blasphemous imperial power which will act under or have the throne of Satan in the last days. The question with me is, if the saints have not lost sight of another power, of which the Scriptures speak more even than of the great public blasphemous government; and that the consideration of this power is necessary to the filling up of the scene according to Scripture. And I further question whether this power be not properly the Antichrist, though there may have been many morally.

I proceed to consider the passages, and present the thoughts which have occurred to me. Antichrist is not spoken of nominally, that I am aware of, elsewhere than in the epistle of John. There, it is needless to say, his character is wholly religious—an heretical and apostate activity against the person and glory of Christ and the essential doctrines of truth as connected with Him, and of which Christianity is formed. “They went out from us,” thus manifested “that they were not all of us.” The apostle then directed the attention of the younger saints who had heard that there would be an Antichrist to this, as giving his character and marking the last times. Further, he denies the Father and the Son—the revelation proper to and constituting Christianity. He does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh—the other great cardinal basis of the truth. We may add, not as in contrast with Christianity, but as generally

characteristic, “Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ?” This would be the first point to which godly Jews would be brought, without speaking of the doctrines of Christianity. When this was really owned, a man could be recognised as born of God. When the Christ formed the subject of religious belief and expectation, to own Jesus to be it implied a proper work of God. An apostate and heretical character is given then as the mark of Antichrist, and, further, as of Satan (“who is a liar?”). He does not own (which seems to me more Jewish connection and evil) Jesus to be the Christ. Who was the Christ, not what He was, is the subject of interest, and that is an answer to Jewish expectation, and the test of Jewish incredulity—(“If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”), and he who is a liar denies that the blessed Jesus is. It is evident that the presenting Himself as the Son made the Jews reject Him as the Christ, because thus they were, man was, morally put to the test; and it must have been so to be according to truth, and also in order not to present an object to human passions in a religious form, but the truth and glory and Son of God— God himself morally, and the manifestations of the Father in grace to the heart and conscience of men. (See John 8:14-24). Still the two things are distinct, though impossible to separate, as both are united in His Person.

I may add here that the translation, “this is that [spirit] of Antichrist,” is hardly warranted, that is, the insertion of the word “spirit,” but I do not feel need to say more. In general, it is evident that what the Spirit of God designates as characterising this Antichrist are religious qualities or energies of evil. He is occupied with religious subjects, and characterised by that occupation,

and in connection with Christianity and Judaism. This is not, perhaps, all his character; but it is characteristic: this is the “of the Antichrist.” This is evidently of great importance. There is an energising spirit of this character.

We have then the fact as to the history of the latter day, that there are two beasts or manifestations of power united in their operations, but at the same time very distinct; each of them amazingly important in the place it holds, though one be distinctively on the throne of the prince of this world, the other not. Whatever title they may hold, those are the two. I speak of this, because, in some passages, and in our minds in reflecting on the spirit of the age, the general character may be presented, and we readily forget that there are certainly historically two vessels of evil power: one having the public authority and a certain character; the other, in whom is the energy which acts and produces the effect on men, in subservience to the throne and public power.

I shall consider first this second beast in whom the energy of seduction is found. It will hardly be questioned that the Antichrist, whatever system of interpretation is adopted, is found in one or other of these two vessels of evil power. First, then, the second is a beast. That is, there is an analogy in the nature of their existence. Now beasts are a well known figure; and I am not aware of any case in which they are not a temporal power; so that we have here a temporal power subsisting along with the great general power who had Satan’s throne. This is nothing surprising, as we know horns or kings will so subsist who give their power to the beast. This is different, it is true, but it is a temporal power. It had two horns lamb-like. The Lamb is not Christianity but Christ.

This beast, then (Rev. 13) in the form of its power resembled Christ, but its language was the full character and pretension of Satan, its speech dragon-like. This is evidently a remarkable character, a form of power like Christ, a language like Satan, not in deceit merely but in public pretension. It is not as a serpent, but a dragon—a royal Christ-like power with Satanlike language. But the power of this beast is exceeding great, though that of Satan. He exercises all the power of the first beast before him; he does not take it away at all from the former, far from it; but he exercises it all—the essential energy of evil is in him, though the other may be clothed with it. He makes the earth and its inhabitants worship him who was publicly on Satan's throne, whose deadly wound was healed. But his energy of evil was not only in the exercise or administration of another's power—he acts in intrinsic power as a prophet.

We shall see another character of this power in a moment; but I confine myself to this passage now. The character of the display of this power is frightful. What the prophets of Baal could not do, and what Elias did, as a contrasting proof that Jehovah alone was the true God, this beast does, at least in the eyes of men, besides other great signs. He seduces and deceives the inhabitants of the earth through the signs he was given to do before the beast. The beast would be content enough to have such an energy to sustain and support his throne, and exalt and adorn his authority in the eyes of men—authority which rested only in deceit and delusion of mind, or persecution. This seducing prophet and power leads them on to idolatry also, and gives breath to the image of the beast, so as to speak and have

those killed who did not worship it. Thus, while sustaining the throne of Satan in the world, this second beast, while Satanic in his language, speaking like the dragon, has the form of royalty and prophecy established by signs, and such signs to the eyes of men as had erst sufficed to establish Jehovah's sole name and authority in the mind of Israel, to the destruction of an incapable Baal. The aim, however, of all is the recognition of Satan's authority in him whom he has placed on his throne; but the energy which produces the effect on the minds of men is in the second beast. While exercising power and bearing its form (a beast with horns), still religious seduction, and properly such as connects itself with ancient Jehovah-testimony, is what characterises this second beast: he is spoken of in Revelation 19 as the false prophet.

The first beast is evidently the great imperial Gentile power, to whom the empire is given in the accustomed terms of Scripture; but with its healed head, in its last blasphemous state, admired and owned by all not kept of God in sovereign grace, and hating and blaspheming them who had their tabernacle, in heaven. His rise, as that of other beasts had been, is out of the general mass of men—the Gentile world at large— out of the sea, as it is expressed. Besides this, we have inhabiters of heaven. What then is earth, out of which the second beast rises? There is no longer any pretension to heavenly association: all that is blasphemed. This religioso-prophetic influence will have its character and origin within the system and order of what subsists where Satan is and yet rules, this earth; but such position and relationship, when assuming a religious character, however blasphemous or seditious, is Jewish. It is the

religion of the earth, and, viewed as rejecting Christ, must be false. Such, I apprehend, is the character of the seduction of the second beast—heavenly neither in reality nor pretension, but an exhibition of present power here in the sphere to which Satan is now limited. He is the proper present energy of Satan to lead the world to recognise the throne which he has been able to set up here in the first beast, which had its origin providentially in the world like other previous beasts. The second beast is earthy and Jewish in its character. But it is by present power, signs, and delusions (not, as is evident, by the law and the testimony), that he acts.

I would now turn to another passage, where the last form of evil is spoken of, and see what is its character there; 2 Thess. 2. Here we can hardly doubt, on reading verse 9, that there is a connection with the false prophet. But the question may arise, if it is not merely to characterise the time and reign of the beast, or if "whose coming" means that he himself is known by these signs. That is, is it generally characteristic, the first beast or the second?

But let us examine the passage. There is a falling away down here, as there is, on the other hand, a gathering together of the saints to Christ in heaven. The heavenly church takes its own place as gathered up to its Head; and the falling away or apostasy takes place upon earth. The result is the manifestation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. The removal of the church, and the apostasy give room to this. In this chapter it cannot be questioned, that a religious character also is displayed, however wicked and audacious. Secular power is not spoken of, but first its impious and then its seductive character. He is characterised as the man of sin, and the

wicked one, whom a mystery of iniquity has preceded. It does not appear to me that verse 4 gives another idea, or that of secular power; it is moral opposition to God and insult to Him. It is true that the beast of Revelation 17 goes into perdition; but this does not alter the character here given: the two (Rev. 19) perish together. The falling away, it is evident, refers to that which had the name of Christianity, though it goes much farther than its mere rejection. There is an active energising personage bearing the title of Judas, who resists, opposes, and exalts himself against all called God or which is an object of veneration. He is an ardent antagonist of divine authority, and sets up as Adam to be God, and, more, he wills our ruin.

I think I see, then, in verses 3, 4, the moral character of this wicked power acting upon others, and shewing the energy of his will in hostility, and setting aside of God, rather than the object of deference or honour on the throne. He is what fills the scene morally when the apostasy takes place—the active energy which works in man. It is the man of sin—man against God, and pretending to be, or shewing himself as though he were God upon earth: the contrast of Christ, who was so, but was the man of obedience, righteousness, and humiliation, submitting to everything when it was not disobedience to God His Father. The man of sin was a thing to be revealed. Meanwhile a certain mystery of iniquity was at work—the principles of lawlessness—of the independence of man, and the acting of his will, but in mystery only. There was a restrainer until He should be taken out of the way, and then the lawless one would be revealed. But if he was the lawless self-exaltation of man’s will, that was not all. His presence or coming was

according to the energy of Satan; and if we have found in the second beast the terrible analogy with the case of Elias, but in deception, here we have perhaps the yet more frightful one with Christ. The terms by which are expressed what he does in falsehood are the same as those by which, in the Acts, Christ has been shewn a man approved of God (Acts 2:22); and as Christ was in truth of righteousness to such as should be saved, so he in deceit of unrighteousness to those who were given up to be lost, 2 Cor. 2:15. The true Christ will come from heaven, a heavenly Man: this an earthly man, with all the pretensions which could belong to, and the proofs, to those given up to judgment, which would demonstrate his title to glory, but in an entirely earthly way and self-exaltation. God sends an energy of error that they should believe a lie.

It is evident that the point of departure is Christendom, naturally so as writing to Christians, but the manifestation not connected with it; because, though no date is given for that, the saints are viewed as gathered up, the rest as apostate. This (though the character be blasphemous man) would throw it, in its deceptions most especially, among the Jews, though it is here as man, and as to men who have not received the love of the truth when it was there, but have had pleasure in iniquity. Whatever partial moral accomplishment (for there were even early many Antichrists) this may have had in Christendom, taking the apostasy in its full sense, the temple of God acquires a character quite evident.

We may now turn to other passages. Let us consider Daniel n: “The king shall do according to his will.” We find a king in the land (uninformed whence he came; for, though it is a continuation of the history of the king of

the north as being found in that territory, yet the previous verses had carried us on to the time of the end), lawless, self-exalting, magnifying himself above every god; yet this (which might seem to have put a contrast between the characters of 2 Thessalonians and the second beast) does not hinder after all his setting up idolatry—that unclean spirit now gone out of the Jews, but to enter in with seven others worse. “The God of his fathers” —as strong a claim on nature as we know, and owned in Judaism, “nor the desire of women” —that posterity naturally wished for, but of which Christ was the centre of hope among the Jews (for in this verse it evidently refers to religioso-traditional objects and influence), none of these things have any influence over him: he uses idolatry only for his convenience and divides the land as recompense, causing them (his followers, I suppose) to rule over the mass of the Jewish people. Here we have, then, a royal power in Palestine doing as he pleases there, having, as to self-exaltation and blasphemy, fully the character of 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, and disposing of the Jewish people, while rejecting his traditional God, and blaspheming the God of gods (the dragon-voice and character, I judge).

I may say here, that the anti-Christian power will not be imitation of Christ, save as being king and prophet, but opposition to Christ; for to a Jew, having a form of Jewish holiness, blasphemies could not recommend. But they are given up to delusion, and the dragon-language is taken with the rest, as is idolatry, which will clearly take place. The Lord characterises it as one coming in his own name. This is the Jewish part of his history in connection with the territorial limits of the Grecian

empire. You may find “the king” again Isaiah 57:9, and 30:33, where read “for the king also it is prepared.”

I now turn to another passage where we have a power clearly distinguished from the beast, and which nevertheless stamps it with his character, and is, at the same time, peculiarly connected at the end with the Jewish people, though hating what was heavenly. I refer to Daniel 7, where a distinct horn rises after all the others, different from them, subduing three—a horn always as such distinct from the beast, but which brings judgment on it, and whose actings at the end make it morally the grand affair. Here we have many characteristics of the first beast’s actings, attributed to him in Revelation 13. We see the horn to be the active agent here, for the horn is looked at as part of the beast here, his generally secular or Gentile totality being the point of view in which it is considered. Still the little horn is evidently a distinct agent. If it be thought that the horn is really, though locally only, possessing the territory of three, the virtual head of the whole empire as a chief, besides his own territory, and hence that he would correspond rather to the first beast of Revelation 13 where the general character of the beast itself only is given, I should have nothing that I am aware of to object. The other point would remain untouched. The moral points of union are evident: the two beasts play into each other’s hands; one, as we have seen, holding the public authority and throne, the other exercising the energy of Satan. It had even occurred to me that 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, and 8, might distinctively denote them; but I pursue the study of the passage. This horn had the intelligence and foresight of thought and purpose, which was more than power and conquest,

design and consideration, place and haughty pretensions avowed: he brings judgment on the beast. Three things are attributed to him: “speaking great words against the Most High “(this is more than the Ancient of days; it is the supremacy of God as above all); he wears out the saints of the high places; and*he thinks to change times and laws (Jewish order and ordinances) and they are delivered into his hand. So that we find atheistical pretensions, a persecution of any saints who are connected with heaven, and a perversion of the order of Jewish polity as outward ordinances. This lasts for three years and a half. He is directly, therefore, in connection with the Jewish order of things. If there are saints who look to higher blessings, he wears them out. That there will be those there who shall have a heavenly position in the reign, Revelation 15 and 20 assure us. His dominion is taken away in connection with the final judgment on earth. It is the horn who is here considered, who wields it in Palestine (though the beast be destroyed, as is noted in the general history before the explanations), Here then is a distinct power acting in Palestine and subverting Jewish order and ordinances, the beast being distinct yet judged because of what this power spoke. The pretensions of Isaiah 14:12-14 have this same character. Reigning in Zion is here one of his pretensions.

I would now turn to the first beast. The first thing I would remark is, that it is characterised by the royalty of the ten horns; they are crowned. This is characteristic historically. Three fall, but it is, as far as unity subsists, a federate power. The beast implies corporate unity in some measure, as the Roman empire was (whatever its state), a certain known thing, whatever its head or form

of government; and this corporate existence is the meaning of a beast—a bond which enables it to be spoken of as one in relation to those outside it. There is a wounded and healed head, but it is not in any prominence here, save that it is after this that the wondering takes place. It is the beast which is in prominence, and in its general corporate state is characterised by its blasphemy and war with the saints. It is well to remember that the devil is cast out of heaven, and that the heavens and the dwellers upon earth, and earth itself, are the scene of his power. The healing of the head is all that is noticed; it is the beast itself which is in the scene. Satan, as god of this world, gives him his throne and his power; and its man is thus set up, while he turns to act, as we have seen, in sustaining it in the second beast. A woman may ride this beast, but it is the kings who commit fornication with her. But I suppose, whether from chapter 13 or 17 there will be some uniting form of government; but it is the corporate or common existence which gives its life and character to the beast. The kings make war; the kings hate the whore, and the beast—not any head. If the comparison of Daniel 7 and the light thrown on that passage show that the little horn is the same as the head, of which I should feel doubtful, I have nothing to object. It is not my subject at this moment. What I question is the civil head of empire being Antichrist, which seems to me to have a much more religious character—a consideration which has much importance in the study of Scripture. There are several difficulties and questions which present themselves in connection with this; as, for example, the placing or displacing of the influence of Babylon in chapter 17 and the second beast of chapter 13 which I leave for further inquiry.

But I cannot doubt that there will be a civil-religious power in Palestine, having the energy of Satan, and exercising the power of the beast, to whom Satan has given his authority, and this, I suspect, is much more properly the Antichrist, though there be many. But I present this, specially and avowedly, as a subject of inquiry for the saints and those content to learn and follow any increasing light our God in His goodness may see good to give; and certainly He will give all that may be truly profitable to His church.

Signs Of Antichrist

Though the thoughts I send you be very brief, I do not hesitate to communicate them, as I judge they aid in the estimate of one of the principal objects which fill the scene in the last days. And I apprehend that it is not merely in the arrangement of a complete system (for which our knowledge is often too imperfect) that we make progress in the mind of God on this, or indeed on any subject in Scripture, but quite as much in any light which gives a more distinct and definite character to any of the elements which compose the whole, if indeed we can say that prophetic subjects are revealed as a whole. Our sphere of vision, our capacity of embracing the entire scene as God does, necessitates in His communication of the truth the presenting of the parts which compose it: and it is in the attempt to combine them that we often find the greatest difficulty. That they do combine we cannot doubt, and that the points of combination exist since each part is perfect; but the combination itself not being always given, we have to wait much and patiently upon divine enlargement of view to be able to do it justly. The geographer can easily put together the dissected map, but the child (and we are children) must learn the geography in a slower process of putting it together. I suspect we have made them less, while some elements are very certain, than we are disposed to think. But every progress in distinct knowledge of the elements facilitates the apprehension of the whole.

I proceed to notice two characteristics of the evil power in the latter days which may aid in this—very simple, but

which have much struck me. One has been noticed some years back. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9 we have the statement that the presence of the wicked [one] will be with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; that is, “in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood.” If we compare this with Acts 2:22, we find that the blessed Lord is described as a man approved of God, i.e., proved to be of Him, His mission and truth proved by miracles (powers), wonders, and signs. That is, we have three things which were proofs of the truth and mission of the Lord Jesus, attesting to the eyes of men the title of the wicked one: in this case, falsehood is of course added, “lying” or of falsehood; but this does not, as to the terribleness of the case or its character, alter it, because men are given up then to believe falsehood, or what is lying; 2 Thess. 2:11. In their state, it is a complete presenting of the proofs of Christ. If we turn to Revelation 13 we have a circumstance analogous to this, which completes the horror of it (v. 13). “And he doeth great wonders [signs] so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men.” Now, reference to 1 Kings 18 shews us that this was the grand and sovereign test of the prophet and messenger of Jehovah. Priests of Baal in vain essayed to produce this proof proposed by Elijah, to make known who was the true God in the solemn declaration to the people, “If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him”; and to preclude any further halting between two opinions, it was decided that the God that answered by fire, He was to be God; and Elijah thereon prays that it might be evident also that he was Jehovah’s prophet, and that he had done all this at His word. And effectively at the sight of the fire descended from heaven, the people cry out “Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.”

But in these terrible days that are to come, this proof also is given by the false prophet, the beast with two horns as a lamb.100 That is, the very thing which was the absolute and well-known test of Jehovah's power and the mission of His messenger now accredits the false prophet. It is in the sight of men, no doubt, but that is sufficient for its object. We have, then, that which bore witness to Christ's mission as of God, as Messiah on earth; that which witnessed and tested Elijah's message as coming and sent by Jehovah— both accrediting the pretensions of the wicked one and of the false prophet. It is a frightful picture and testimony to the way in which they that dwell on the earth are given up to blindness in that day. I leave to be weighed by your readers the extent to which these circumstances give a Jewish character to the instruments and power of evil referred to in these passages (1 John 2:18), excluding any necessity to restrict it absolutely to such an accomplishment, supposing it is admitted.

100 Perhaps better rendered "lamb-like." At any rate, the allusion is evident j and note here, it is Christ in Person who is the Lamb.

Questions Of Interest As To Prophecy

1—The Antichrist Properly So Called

I am still inquiring as to Antichrist, but I had not overlooked the difficulties. It has been taken for granted among those who expect a personal Antichrist, that he is the civil head of the Roman empire. This I question. Without doubting in the least that there will be such a blasphemous Gentile power, it seems to me that the Antichrist is another power, of which the Scriptures are even more full—the vessel of evil religious energy, rather than that of evil public government. At least, two such manifestations of power we find in Revelation 13, for the second is a beast, as well as the first. That is, there is a second temporal power coexistent with the public imperial power, which has the throne of Satan. The first beast had risen, like previous beasts, out of the sea (i.e., out of the tumultuous floating mass of population—the Gentile world). But the second beast came out of the earth; i.e., out of the formed arrangement of God's moral providence—the sphere where the dragon and the beast were worshipped, and all heavenly association was blasphemed. In form of power, this second beast was like the Lamb; but his speech was like the dragon, or great hostile power of Satan—a religious though blasphemous character of evil at work within the sphere where Satan rules. Such a relationship will be found to be Jewish. It is the religion of the earth, not of the dwellers in heaven, and is Jewish in character—a power in the earth ostensibly connected with divine things, falsely, and verified in the sight of men by the exhibition

of judicial power as of God. Revelation 19 speaks of the second beast as the false prophet.

The Antichrist is not spoken of by name, save in the Epistles of John, where his character is religious, not secular—apostate and heretical activity against the Person and glory of Christ and the essential doctrines of Christianity. He denies the Father and the Son. He does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh. He denies that Jesus is the Christ, which seems rather Jewish in its connection and evil, more than the denial of the revelation which constitutes Christianity. Antichrist, in a word, is characterised by religious energies of evil in connection with Christianity and Judaism.

In 2 Thessalonians 2 it is a wicked religious, and not a mere secular, power which is spoken of—its impious, then its seductive, character. Verse 4 is moral opposition and insult to God, rather than the object of deference, who was publicly on Satan's throne. It is the active personage, with Judas' title, who opposes all divine authority—the man of sin shewing himself as though he were God; the contrast of Christ, who was God, and yet was the man of obedience. His presence, too, is according to the energy of Satan; and as Christ in truth of righteousness to such as should be saved, so he in deceit of unrighteousness to such as should be lost.

In Daniel 11:36, etc., is the king, and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, etc. That is, we have the same qualities and acts; and yet he honours the God of forces, and honours and increases with glory a strange god. So that it would seem that the haughty rejection of the true God and self-exaltation is not inconsistent with being servant of a false one, really

slave to the enemy—an old lesson learnt all through human nature, and never learnt. Self-exaltation is not supremacy. I apprehend, or am inclined to think, that this self-exaltation will be, specially in result, in Judea against God; but my difficulty just lies there, because in Daniel 7 the little horn seeks to change times and Laws (i.e., I apprehend, the Jewish order) and this looks like the power of the Antichrist, while the little horn there is uncommonly like the first beast (i.e., its last head). The difficulty is in apportioning the parts where both work together. The process seems natural, painful to say. The apostasy is denying the Father and the Son and that Jesus is the Christ. This throws them on Judaism (which was always the mystery of iniquity in principle) and thus on Antichrist, who at last throws off all in self-exaltation, and makes them, during the last half-week, worship a strange God; and the tribulation takes place. It seems to me that the deepest troubles in the-Psalms (I do not speak of the cross) come from a Jewish character, not an open enemy, but a companion or familiar friend—ungodliness and strife in the city. The self-exaltation is moral character, not public power, unless in his own sphere. This self-exaltation would be his own apostate setting up in Judea; but, finding it convenient for himself, and it being the work of Satan, he forces all to recognise the Roman emperor, which for the Jews is apostasy. It would be the old Josephus question, save that saints who flee or bow take the place of sicarii.101 It is a kind of suzerainty. This false Christ in the east making head in the interest of the western emperor against all, and deceiving the Jews by Satanic power in the east, he wields all the power of the empire; he joins the recognition of the western emperor to the Satanic deception of the Jews, his own people probably. The

little horn of Daniel 7 certainly seems the more general power, which, while local (like Bonaparte, a France), governs the whole beast.

2—The Force Of “The Last Day” In John 6

As regards John 6, the Lord is, to me, evidently substituting a blessing in resurrection to any royal Jewish blessing. Owned the prophet, and refusing to be king carnally, He goes up alone on high, and the disciples are sent away alone, toiling on the sea (a Jewish remnant strictly), and arrive as soon as He rejoins them; but He is fed upon in humiliation and death in the interval, and hence to such the blessing comes in resurrection; he (i.e., the believer) will be raised up in the last day. Jesus will not bless him as come down here before giving him his portion where He is gone up in the power of everlasting life. The last day is in contrast with their present blessing under a king; it is never the day of the Lord, save in the vague sense that it embraces all the closing period, which is its true force. He does not come and set up the Jews, but the Father draws, and a man comes to Him; and the way He blesses him is in the power of eternal life, raising him up when the close of all this busy and rebellious scene arrives. That shall be his portion in that day—not Messianic security now.

3—The Allusion In “The Last Trump” 1 Corinthians 15:52

After all the grave and wise speculations on “the last trump,” I strongly suspect it is merely an allusion to military matters. Somewhere in Josephus’ Wars, and perhaps in other books, we have the order of a breaking

up of a Roman camp, and at the last trump they all break up and march forward. Now, I acknowledge that scripture interpretation is not to be borrowed from without; but I have seen only tortured linkings with other passages within. I am content to take the general idea of the last public call of God relating to the church, and leave it there; but what suggested the image, I suspect, was what I say; just as the Greek for "assembling shout" in 1 Thessalonians 4, beyond controversy, is a similar military term used to a similar purpose. Matthew 24:31 ("And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet"), I have not the smallest shadow of a doubt, applies to the assembling of the Jews (elect, as in Isaiah 65) after Christ is come.

4—Luke 21 Compared With Matthew 24

As to Luke 21 it is much more historical, because it opens out, as revealing the Son of man, the period in which Israel is set aside and not counted in its history, or what concerns the Gentiles. Hence the Spirit records no enquiry of "the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age," but the general history in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus, from verse 9 to verse 19 inclusive we have the state of things from after the Lord's death until the encircling of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, and no mention made of the abomination of desolation, and verse 20 gives the reply to the question of verse 7, founded on verse 6. The statement accordingly says nothing of the tribulation such as never was; but that vengeance then comes on the people and city, that all may be accomplished. This still continues and will continue, Jerusalem being trodden down, till the

times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, in the close of the Gentile dominion begun in Nebuchadnezzar.

Then the fact is revealed of the state of things at the close of the dominion of Gentile power—signs in sun, moon, and stars; on earth, distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring (the last expression shewing, I think, that the words are employed figuratively, though there may be possibly portents also); men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven (the sources of the earthly state of things) shall be shaken. And then shall they (not "ye," but they, these proud, rebellious Gentiles102) see the Son of man coming in a cloud.

Such is the prophetical revelation which presents, it seems to me, little difficulty. The exhortation which follows may suggest more; at the same time, it offers some remarkable helps as to the use of expressions. For example, "this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled" (v. 32) proves, necessarily, either that "generation" must be taken in an extended sense, as in Deuteronomy 27:5, 20, and as in other passages; or, that "all" could only apply to the establishment of the state of things at the setting aside judicially of the Jewish people, because we have the treading down of Jerusalem for a long continuous period revealed. Hence we have to seek the guidance of the Spirit for the application of the passage, there being an incipient accomplishment at the destruction or treading down of Jerusalem, its desolation, vengeance, etc., which subsists still, and a far fuller one at the close preceding the coming of the Son of man. Hence the Holy Ghost records here an expression which may apply to both: "Know ye that the

kingdom of God is nigh at hand." I do not doubt that this had a certain accomplishment in the absolute suppression of the Jewish order, but no fulfilment; and that the kingdom of God will be established by the coming of the Son of man after the signs of verses 25, 26. Note also that this passage precludes the possibility of the application of "the coming of the Son of man" to the destruction of Jerusalem, because we have already had the long treading down, consequent on the encompassing with armies. The full natural application of verses 28-31, then, is to the close when, these signs having taken place, the full deliverance of the Jewish faithful will take place. So verse 35 has a limited application to Judea or Palestine; but it is evident to me that there is the larger application of the coming of the day of the Lord on the whole earth. It is the day that is spoken of. Verse 36 seems to me also to refer absolutely to the character of a Jewish remnant (though in a still better sense it will be true of the church); but in its proper application it is the escape of judgments then, and standing before the Son of man when He takes the kingdom.

In Matthew 24 the Lord passes over all the times of the Gentiles unnoticed, and speaks only of Jerusalem, as though under judgment recognised of God, so far as to be the object of His thoughts and dealings. Verse 14 only takes the broad fact that the gospel of the kingdom should be preached to all nations (a thing not yet accomplished to the letter), and then the end should come. I judge then that while the whole reply will have an accomplishment at the close, there was sufficient in the early part to guide the saints between the Lord's ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem; but that its

fulfilment will yet take place, to the end of verse 14 being general, and from verse 15 being absolutely and exclusively the last half-week of Jewish tribulation.

There is a point which I think has not been duly borne in mind; it is that the unfaithful servant will, for the judgment, pass over into the time of the Son of man's judgment, so that what is called the church may go on, in whatever apostasy of condition, into the state of things which takes place when the church of the faithful is gone. Laodicea is threatened with being vomited out of the Lord's mouth, but when it is vomited is not said, if it be taken for literal judgment. I am disposed to think Judaism will play an active part in connection with the apostate church, and that there will be an astonishing amalgam; though, besides that, the church form may continue until destroyed by the horns and the beast.

101 Sicarii:—A band of Jews who refused to serve any authority or bow to any power save to God Himself, and accepted death rather than such submission—to the Roman power in their case—and even slew those who accepted servitude. Loyalty and devotion given in return for protection is the essence of suzerainty. [Ed.]

102 In Matthew is given the full development of Jewish dispensation, and this so much so, that I could not apply any of the statements in Matthew 24 or the like, to Gentile circumstances; whereas Luke explicitly opens the door, and brings them into the scene, as may be seen in the close of chapter 21. Whence also, I believe, he introduces "all the trees," the fig-tree being the specific emblem of the Jewish corporate nationality.

Outline Of The Revelation

It is important to remark, first of all, that the Revelation is a book of judgment—judgment on the earth (in the interval between the church and an owned state on earth, the secret springs being shewn in heaven, where alone the earthly acts could be understood) first, of the professing church as a system on the earth, where it is responsible to maintain the truth and testimony of God, and then, of the world. In the latter case, the church is no longer at all in question. The only places in which the church is seen in its Christian affections and position is in the beginning and at the end of the book, before the subject of it is opened and after it is closed. In the first case it is seen in its members, in the last as a whole (I refer to chap, 1:6 and chap 22:17).

Further, it is important to remark, that the character in which Christ reveals Himself in the opening of the book, is wholly earthly—heaven is excluded. He is the faithful Witness, the First-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. The church knows Him in all these characters, and is associated with the last two. She ought to have replaced the first; but she is never seen here in that position. John does not even set himself on the ground of the church's witness and heavenly place; he is in the tribulation, kingdom, and patient expectation of Christ. The first time the church is addressed, it is with warnings and threatenings, as being already fallen. If seen in her own character, it is only to look for Jesus.

Christ judges divinely, though as Son of man (a name of judgment and government), also in the midst of the

church seen on earth and responsible to bear light there. He is eternal, searching in judgment and consuming, in firmness of power, having in His own hand the symbolical representatives of the churches or states of the professing church which He addresses. The word of sharp judgment proceeded out of His mouth. Sovereign authority shone in His visage. However, He had the power of life (and that out of death) to him that bowed to Him; and John therefore was to write what he saw—not merely to be confounded by it, but to make known this character of judgment to the churches— "the things that are" (for that was now the real relationship of Christ to the body here below, standing in the position of testimony) and "the things that were to happen after them"; for only after these Christ and the church would take their place in manifestation of glory and testimony. Hence the rapture of the church, unless it be in mystery, is not known here, because this is testimony on the earth or that which governs the earth both secretly and publicly (and so judgments there); and the church's taking up to heaven forms no part of this. That is its portion in its own relationship to Christ of privilege and affection. We see testimony looked for in its earthly state at the beginning, and what is needed for its public manifestation at the end. In the first it had already failed; but the second (blessed be God!) cannot; for it is accomplished by divine power. The former first presents itself, there is no promise of inward grace, no supply of strength. Motives, promises, encouragements, warnings, threatenings, and judgments announced… all these the Son of man holds out; but never an inward supply of grace, never one word such as "my grace is sufficient for thee," "my strength is made perfect in weakness." He was dealing with the responsibility of the church as a

profession in the earth—as a position to be maintained, not in His affection for His beloved saints, nor for His bride the church.

This, it is evident, gives a very important character to these addresses and is easily verified by the reader; we are on earth with a Judge, not in heaven, nor in communion with a Saviour. It is not a mere judge—that is for the world—but One who rebukes and chastens because He loves (still that is in a certain sense judicial) —One who is patient, gracious, pains-taking, vigilant to warn and shew the failure, and the path to follow, the sentiments that become the state of those He addresses Himself to; but who can spue out of His mouth that which, after all the pains taken, does not answer what He has a right to and must expect and require. This is not the church of His elect, though they may be there. It is the body which has a public responsibility to maintain its testimony in the earth. The churches then present Christ's judgment on, and dealings with, the professing body, or at least those who have ears to hear when their first decay attracts His vigilant and bounden care, till they are utterly rejected as a witness on the earth: patient but judicial in its character, and failing in no one warning which, if listened to, might have led to the avoidance of the judgment, and adding every promise which could encourage and sustain faith. It is not the Spirit in the church acting for the preservation of the body, by maintaining in the conscience and in the heart the testimony of, and dependence on, Christ, putting away the evil and drawing down the good, but the Spirit from without addressing itself to the churches or professing body in its various states, and informing it of

Christ's judgment of that state—an entirely different thing.

To the world, as we shall see, all is simple judgment; till the time of glory, graduated judgment, but only judgment, though a remnant may be preserved through it. What we have previously enlarged upon constitutes "the things that are" — the characteristic state of the church, with Christ's judgment upon it while it continues a public—the public—witness on Christ's behalf in the world. Various and even contemporaneous elements may enter into this; but together they prove the judicial history of what.the church has been as a professing witness from beginning to end. I may perhaps enter into some details further on. These "things which are" close, however: God no longer recognises the professing church as a public witness, even a blamable one. The moment is not stated nor the manner. He ceases to speak (for His words are the warning of, not the execution of, judgment), when He said, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." It may continue to the eyes of man, when, every saint of the true church being gone, it is no longer in any way the object of Christ's care, even judicial, and may be left to Satan to make any use he pleases of it. Perhaps some awhile drag on in self-delusion their association with its existence. I say this, not to lead to speculation on what may be, but to arrest conclusions as to what is not, that is, the accomplishment of the act of cutting off. There is no candlestick which God owns, nor light at all. The carcase may be there which hindered and corrupted; the soul is fled.

After these things another order of events begins. There is nothing which God owns in the earth as a corporate

testimony. God, dealing with the earth itself, begins His government of it. And the prophet sees a door open above; and the voice like a trumpet, which had previously led him to turn round and see the candlesticks on the earth, now calls him up to heaven, where he sees the scene and throne of power which is to begin to act on the earth—a God manifested as Jehovah the creator on the throne, in characteristics in general in which He had carried on the government of the earth, and more particularly among the Jews upon the earth. The covenant with them (which, if it had failed on earth on their part, was maintained intact in nature and purpose in heaven) was not yet referred to, but would be further on. But the sovereign pledge which secured the blessings of creation till the earth should be no more, was plainly seen; of this the rainbow was the sign; and, further on, the cherubic throne, the temple, and the ark of the covenant were the expressions of the one; and the well-known rainbow was the assurance of the infallibility of the other. But the features with which John saw the throne surrounded require more special mention; for none of those attached to the covenant with the Jews (unless we consider the cherubim such) were the first associations of it. It is only at the close of chapter 11 (i.e. of the whole of the first series of visions, and of the succession of events to the end, viewed in their general history), or more properly at the beginning of chapter 12, that the temple and the ark of the covenant are introduced. We find typical parts of the temple used as being in heaven with the scene suitably attached to them, and the multitude worship in this temple; but the temple itself is not brought into view. The idea is a throne in heaven, centre and source of the government of the world, and One who was there, whatever man

might think, to exercise it. There was a sitter on it. That is, we have, first, the state of the professing church, or what God noticed as the specially responsible and characterising part of it; secondly (after that, when that was out of view, God having no longer anything to say to it on earth) we have the throne of government in heaven, and God declaring or recalling His pledge of the blessing and security of creation, whatever chastenings and judgments there might be. It was still a mystery of God; for to none but faith was it known that all the terrible things which were coming in were the direct and detailed effect of a government of God, which was not yet manifested, though it acted on the earth. This continues to the end of chapter 11 except the little open book. Thirdly, we have then the signs of the covenant and government of Israel on earth again brought to view, not in public acknowledged result, but that God held it good in heaven, though He could not yet publicly give it place on earth; but there was with Him an object of covenant on earth, an object on earth in respect of which, not merely on which, He acted. What were the features which characterised the throne?

First, divine glory—the manifestation of the divine character.103 After this (which was His intrinsic character and manifestation) we have the bright and early sign of His covenant with creation;104 but the Lord had associated other thrones with His. This was the third feature. I say associated thrones, for there was nothing which entered into connection with the first throne itself; but it was equally remarkable that there were other thrones besides the central one. They have a position given to them apart from, though associated with, the throne of the Lord, endowed with wisdom

from, and experience of, the ways of God for government according to their knowledge of Christ and God's thoughts and ways in Him. They were clothed in the raiment of righteousness as personally worthy, or clothed with Christ in their knowledge of righteousness; and the crown of righteousness, made good through conflict, was upon their head. God had placed them there. Such was their character, intelligent, holy, confided authority: but the manifestation of the terror of God's power flowed forth from the throne itself.

In presence of it was the manifestation of the various and searching, yea, consuming perfections of the Eternal Spirit, through which it could be reached, if man could. And who could abide them? Established purity, unalterable in character, was there. It was not that which washed filth, but which implied its absence; and the standing there was where there was none. This was what characterised the throne in the way up to it. In fine, we have this heavenly throne thus doubly characterised.

It was a manifestation of the invisible God—there was a sitter on it, God in manifestation and government; next it was in the manifestation of that glory which, though fully divine, is communicable. The city had the glory of God, as we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; but this was, in its light—its wall—its first foundations, jasper. That is what He who here sat on the throne was in manifestation, together with the last of the foundations, as we have seen, completing what the city was founded on. It was the millennial glory—the manifestation of God in power, evil being put away, or in that moral character which resulted from, or was displayed in, its being put away, after all manner of moral exercise, displayed while

it existed, whether in the patience of power, or the forming a character intelligent of God, thus displayed. Next, it was the security of the blessing of creation on that day. And further, there were the associated thrones of conferred power in the maturity of intelligence, and an administration, not of mere sovereign royalty, though thrones they were, but of interest, intelligent inter jst, and care over, as associated with, on God's behalf, those whom the Lord would bless. But then, besides this, the present character of the throne, not as connected with the elders, was Sinai-terror and power. The consuming power of the perfections of the Spirit, and the immitigable requirement of unchangeable purity. This is not a throne of grace. And connected with this were four living creatures, not on conferred thrones; but entering so to speak into the composition of the throne itself, the power, firmness, intelligent nature, and rapidity of action necessary in the judgments of Him who governed in a world which had ceased to heed Him, and where what He could recognise in testimony, in grace, so as to deal with it in patient moral display of what He was, subsisted no longer. These ways of God in judgment were swift and rapid in their power, and saw, not in outward appearance, but with the perfections of internal discernment; and glorify—not as Jesus, the Father, but—the Lord God Almighty, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai. When the Eternal God is thus glorified, the four-and-twenty elders worship Him they know on the throne, and recognise the Eternal in Him, the God of providence and creation; for they have understanding in the character and reasons why glory can be given to God, and to suit their praises to the character in which He is manifested. The others manifest His attributes. These know Him that has them, what His rights and worthiness are—His

sovereign title to dispose of the creation, the creature of His will. There is intelligent adoring of Him who has associated them with His glory.

Such is the power in exercise here: we have now the knowledge of that in which it was to be exercised—the book fully written out, but as yet absolutely sealed. God's ways with the church are ways of revelation, full gracious holy communications to act morally on those intelligent by the new nature and the Spirit. Now we have the unrolling, as an object of intelligence, of His judicial dealings with that with which He was not in this relationship, communicated to the church prophetically, not in communion about itself. Who could do this? Of these purposes of God there was no moral intelligence founded on principle merely. He who could wield the title and power of judgment, who, having suffered perfectly for God's glory and gained the title to the inheritance, when tried to the uttermost—God's power in holiness and judgment being in exercise—He could, and this the elders understood; for intelligence is theirs. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, had prevailed to open the book. He who was to wield divine power in the house chosen of God on earth, to sit on the throne of the Lord, as is said of Solomon; He who was even the source of all this power and promise—He had prevailed to open it; but it was by perfectly glorifying God in suffering, it was redemption-glory. Also, He has hence much wider that Judaic or David glory even, as the strength and source of it; for there is a double character of the Lamb, as there was of the throne. The millennial glory on earth should be His in the title of His Person: but, having His place in the power of divine government, encircled by the glory, invested with the

power, and characterised by it, which belonged to the present power of the throne and the intelligence of God's ways in conferred glory, the result of the moral ways and dealings of God in the midst of the throne, the beasts, and the elders, a Lamb standing as slain, with full perfect power and intelligence in all their forms, and that in the exercise of them in God's ways105 upon earth in government. "And he came and took the book." So that we have the two-fold character of the Lamb also, what He will be in the millennium, what He is in the present character of His power—this last connected with His sufferings and death. On His taking the book, a new song begins; joy belongs to the whole, beasts and elders, and another element discloses itself. There are yet saints on the earth in whom heaven is interested; a new song is sung in heaven, based on redemption—not merely power and holy title to glory, but all the dealings of God in power, in creation, as well as the joint-heirs of glory, are interested in this; all things in heaven and earth are the subjects of reconciliation, as well as the church.

Hence, though I doubt not that the elders are particularly in question here, still all could sing "us." The difference of "us" and "them" is not a difficulty here, because as the singers recognise their being subjects of redemption as all the rest, so the assurance that the suffering saints whose prayers they presented would reign and be a kingdom of kings and priests was of the highest interest and utmost propriety—just what was important to be brought out here, the grand point to result, after Christ's glory, from all the scenes of this book, for the church scene we have seen closed; but there were saints in connection with the government and providence of God with the eyes of the Lamb

running through the earth, in the scene of the judgments on a heedless world, which this book was to unfold, whose lot it was all-important to point out.

Round the throne and the beasts, and elders, who gave it its character, the heavenly host praise Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb, and all creation echoes it, with the “Amen” of the living creatures. This embraces the subjects of chapters 1 and 2: and the four-and-twenty elders worship. The living creatures do not worship. They render testimony to the glory of Him on the throne, and to the redemption by the Lamb, but they do not worship. This belongs to the elders—precious privilege!

We now enter on the scene in which those saints are placed who had learned to look up to heaven, according to the character of God here displayed; not the church, as we have seen, but yet heavenly in the source of their hopes. It is precious to know that, whatever may be the terrible progress of the divine judgments, not only are we of the church hid in the hollow of His hand, and, if we keep the word of His patience, kept from the hour of temptation, and an open door meanwhile (what grace for such!) set before us; but it is the Lamb who opens the course of judgments to which men themselves are exposed, so that for the saints found there there is a sure warrant of guardian care through the trial. I do not enter into details of the first four seals; they are the historic progress of God’s dealings with the world which has not known Him in grace. Favour shewn to the wicked has been of no avail. Will the lifting up of God’s hand produce any effect? But all this seems nothing more than the ordinary course of events; only that the hand of God waxes heavier and heavier in judgment—war of conquest, mutual destruction, famine and sword,

famine and pestilence and the beasts of the earth, God's four sore providential plagues. (See Ezek. 14:21.) Hence we find that the four living creatures with the voice of God's power call the prophet to come and see. These temporal providential judgments are thus complete. And this is the subject of the book. But we have seen suggested the existence of recognised saints, but in no formally recognised place as regards the church; because the known things were the saints reigning in heaven, and the world judged on earth, because we have left the church as a witness on earth. And here we find there have been some of them put to death,106 offered up as burnt offerings to God; and the cry proceeds from under the altar, which demands the execution of the judgment directly on the inhabitants of the earth. This is not the church's cry, but of those that are in relationship with judgment and the throne, and have their thoughts associated with it—a necessary consequence of their position; for it is their only refuge. "Despot (Master)! holy and true," is the title they appeal to. They are clothed with the fruits of their sorrow and faithfulness; but for judgment they must wait, till another body of sufferers have filled up the number which requires the judgment of God. But this forms a moral epoch, and the demand is followed by an utter convulsion of all existing institutions and ordinances, so that the kings of the earth, rich and poor, great and small, think that the day of judgment is come, though it be not really so. And thus things were ripened up for what was more truly final; for the previous judgments had been but a beginning of throes. Hitherto it was more like the ordinary circumstances of trial, though with increasing aggravation, and till the cry for judgment arose against a persecuting and unrepenting world.

But the more direct judgments of God were soon now to begin to blow upon the earth, and those owned of God must be sealed. And immediately on this Israel reappears on the scene as the object of God's sure and unceasing care. "Say that they are Jews, and are not," is all that could be said of Judaism while the church was on the scene: now they are noted and numbered, as the people of God, not delivered indeed, but marked. He who saw from heaven could see it as the mission of the four horses, though in earth nothing of it appeared. This closed this portion of the vision. But a new scene bursts on the prophet's sight, a vast multitude in a position as yet unseen. This crowd had no place in the scene in the beginning. It is now first and in special manner introduced in the scene; but the chapter itself, it is to be remarked, is not the course of historical events, but an interruption, to let us into certain purposes of the divine counsel. The former part seals in the earth the election of the earthly people. In this we have a present assemblage of a multitude from among the Gentiles who stand before the throne and the Lamb as victors brought into the fruits of their toil. The God that they knew of, to whom they ascribe salvation along with the Lamb, is God as we see Him displayed in this book, not as He was known to the church, the Father and the Son in communion by the Spirit, but One who, on the throne, had been their Saviour. Historically the church had only seen Him exercising His righteous judgments in the earth, because He could own nothing at this period in the earth. Still here there is found a vast multitude who had been saved through and out of all this, and who were found and owned before the throne that had saved them. They were not indeed in such a position as sitting on thrones crowned, nor did they celebrate the merits

and title to glory of the Lamb that they knew, but they could speak of a salvation which had been granted them, ascribing it to God and the Lamb, accomplished in the midst of the fire. Note, the beasts and elders are excluded here: these saved ones could not stand around them and ascribe salvation (though the angels may be in this position, when it is only a question of place and honour). But the elder interests himself in them, and would have John to know, and draws his attention to them. John refers back to him, for the elders are ever they that have understanding. “These are they who have come out of the great107 tribulation.” Now I do not believe that it is the time of trouble of Matthew 24 which applies more particularly to Judea and the Jews—the time of Jacob’s trouble. This is far more extensive in its sphere, and precedes it in time; for that takes place on the setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place, that is the last three years and a half. But there is a time of temptation which is to come upon all the world to try them which dwell on earth, from which the true church had been preserved, and from which these had not. This is, I apprehend, “the great tribulation,” from the midst of which these have been saved. Thyatira had been threatened that Jezebel should be cast into great tribulation. It is very likely this also is the same. I judge that it refers rather to what follows than to what precedes, up to the time of the rising of the beast out of the bottomless pit when the scene changes, and we have another set of subjects. They have profited fully by the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ, so as to stand before God. They worship in His temple. They are relieved by His presence from every sorrow and sufferance, but they are not with Him and the Lamb in intelligent glory as the crowned elders on the thrones.

They are the subject of their interest, and their explanations—touching witnesses of His tenderness, and patience, but not of intelligent association in His glory, as far as that may be to creatures.

These once set in their place as manifesting the securing power of God's love, the history is resumed. This will not require here much detail. The last seal is opened; and after a short delay in the action of heaven, the seven angels prepare to sound. The first four give rise to the smiting the earth in the four great sources of its riches. The earth (properly speaking), the sea, the rivers, and the sun, moon, and stars. This was not by apparently natural causes, as the famines and the wars of the earliest judgments, but by what made them evidently judgments or plagues: only we have to remark here that these judgments broke forth as the result of offering up the prayers of saints. The censer, in which the great High Priest had offered up his incense, was filled with fire from the altar—God's consuming judgment, and then cast on the earth.

But these plagues in the earth cease, only to give way to bitterer woes on the inhabitants of this hardened world. The first is the letting loose the locusts which came out of the smoke of the bottomless pit, a Satanic darkening of human understanding, the taking away the light of the natural path of man, the shutting out divine and heavenly influence. Out of this darkness go forth those whose business and power is to pass through, pervade, and destroy, not now mere prosperity, but all peace and rest of spirit—to torment men so that they should desire death. It is not an outward plague which touches prosperity, the means of enjoyment—nor life, the loss of which, if it closes pleasure, makes pain cease as to this

world. The springs of joy were poisoned in the heart, in the life left there, by this Satanic mischief; but it was the portion of those only not marked by God. The next plague is more outward chastisement—the killing by the power of the Euphratean horsemen. Still Satanic power goes forth out of their mouth, and in their tails lies and poison were found. But men repented not, neither of their sins nor of their idolatry; such, thus far were the effects of the sounding these terrible trumpets. Diabolical principles and human energy, imbued however with what was Satanic, succeed each other in the desolation of those who have chosen this earth as their portion.

But now a new publication of the last importance comes forth from heaven. The messenger of God's power, clothed with a cloud (the sign of His presence of old among His people), the rainbow (pledge to the creation) on His head, and His feet in consuming judgment, having an open book in His hand, puts His feet, one on the sea, the other on the land, thus claiming all the earth in judgment. When He cried, the whole utterance of divine power gave forth its voice; but the details were not revealed. However, there was to be no longer any delay, but in the days of the seventh trumpet when it should just now sound, the mystery of God would be complete; afterwards it would be open manifest government or revealed glory. The prophecy was to re-commence. The book here is open, it was the dealing and ways of God Himself with a known object, and on known and revealed principles for a short period also, and on a confined scale.

Accordingly we find ourselves evidently at once on Jewish ground, and direct reference to the historical

records of their conduct. Another immense difference appears, too, here; the whole character of the scene changes. It is no longer mysterious agents inflicting on carnal men the judgments of God, the question of witness in the world being entirely withdrawn. On the contrary, we are on the earth with witnesses to the God of the earth; and, on the other hand, plain definitely characterised wickedness, rising up to destroy the true witnesses whom God avowedly owns, and up to a certain time maintains untouched by their enemies. The nature of the scene is thus wholly changed; the book is effectually an open one. First, we had the church on earth; then, dealing in judgment by providential power, and nothing measured by God; now, we have renewed objects of His dealings on earth. He resumes His ways with the Jews108 during forty-two months; then the city and outward court of the temple are given up to the Gentiles. But there are true worshippers in the temple and at the altar of God—worshippers on a Jewish ground of hope by faith, not, I judge, marked merely literally by the temple and altar, but those who really understood approach to God, as priests might who were within, while the general mass were given up to be trodden down, with everything holy in the nation, by the Gentiles. But, besides the priests' reserved worship, there was the power of prophecy, guarded by such power as Moses had and Elias; and with reason, for they had the difficulties of both, the hostility of Gentiles to whom the people were captive, and the apostasy of the people given up to idolatry who had sold themselves to them. But with the forty-two months, the time of their mission closed; and the beast, ascending out of the bottomless pit, kills them, and their bodies remain unburied in the great street of the city called Sodom and

Egypt where their Lord was crucified—in principle, and probably in physical reality, Jerusalem. But, revived by the spirit of life from God, they stand up and go up in a cloud in the sight of their enemies. Judgment and convulsion accompanied this; and a full class of men were killed, for seven thousand is a complete set destined to that. The city may be still naturally supposed Jerusalem; but if taken in a wider sense I do not object, as "the city "is so used. This part gives a definite place to these prophecies. I have no doubt this was the first half week. This is necessarily introduced to give it its place in the general history and connects the two. We have then the second woe closing with the closing of the first half week; it would appear probable (I am inclined to suppose) beginning also within it, but this I leave. The seventh trumpet is the signal of closing all, as had been said, but the events are not related under it, no more than on the opening of the seventh seal; all in which God would, on to the end, display His power, is celebrated as now to take place. And now, before the history is continued, the thoughts of God in the dénouement of it all, (Rev. 10:7) and Satan's opposition, are brought into view, and then the history as the way towards it. Still all flows now on intelligible Jewish ground of interpretation. The blessing is not yet manifested on earth, but it is secured in heaven. Hence the temple is opened in heaven; and the prophet seeks the ark of the covenant, God's sign of unchangeable purpose of blessing, and the voice of His power in judgment accompanies the vision. The counsels of God then appear themselves in connection with the Jewish people. They are to be clothed with supreme glory to bring forth Messiah to reign over the nations in power. In God's view, the old covenant glory, or mere Mosaic estate, is to be under

their feet; and, clothed with the supreme authority, the perfection of human administrative authority crowns their head. But in the bringing forth of the reigning strong man, there was (if not as to the fact, at least as to the accomplishments of the purpose) an interruption. Satan in direct hostile power (his form the Roman government) seeks to destroy this Jewish king of iron sceptre. He is caught up to God and His throne, hidden for the time; and Israel's place is of God in the desert, seen and acted on in the remnant according to God in the latter day. Meanwhile, as I doubt not, the church is associated with the male child (compare the promise of Thyatira). There is war in heaven; Satan is cast out, and then persecutes the Jews as objects of promise, and the woman flees into the desert where God takes care of her. This casting out of Satan is the beginning of the active energy of Christ's kingdom and God's power in it. Heaven was for ever freed from the accuser, to the joy of those who dwelt there and rejoiced in the deliverance thus accomplished of their brethren who had been in conflict. Their combat is now closed—they have overcome. Blessed those who dwell in heaven! but woe to earth and sea, because of the wrath of him who knows that his remaining time is short! This important event, the casting down for ever of Satan from heaven, where he shall no longer be the adversary of the saints, introduces the last three years and a half, the peculiar character of which is his power, and working, and rage upon earth in consequence. Not merely the saints of the church long since out of view, but the saints in conflict in the immediately preceding epoch are out of his reach. They have overcome, suffered, and their victory is celebrated; but if God had not shortened the days, no flesh would be saved of those subject to his violence on

earth. The woman (the Jews as objects of God's purpose) and her seed are the great object of his malice; but the woman is secured, and he makes war with the remnant of her seed, characterised as having the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus (that is, as being faithful in obedience, of which the commandment of God, the law, was the measure, and walking by the light and spirit of prophecy); for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

Satan's plans in that terrible time are then unfolded; a beast rises, as to its providential existence, out of the mass and confusion of the nations; its form was that often kingdoms, distinct governments, yet a corporate body which had had itself seven forms of government, and embraced the qualities of power of all the previous empires, and to which Satan gives his throne and power. He blasphemes against God, his tabernacle (I suppose his heavenly one in the church), and against those that dwell in heaven. It is an essentially earthly beast exalting man and what is seen, and filled with hatred of all that was above him and that was heaven. Save the elect, he has empire given him; and those who have their portion on earth worship him. He had one of his forms of existence wounded to death, but this was healed; it was a Satanic imperial power and body, formed however of the union of several kingdoms. But there was yet another instrument of the enemy's; if he set up the first beast on the throne in power as an object, he wrought in another as an agent. The second beast arises out of the earth. It is in the already formed and ordered system. He is a power, and the form of his power is Christ's (not Christianity but Christ's); but his voice was Satan's. He does ample signs also to prove

himself the prophet sent of God, doing that which Elijah did as the test between Jehovah and Baal. He has the claims in form of Christ's royalty, and works peculiar signs as a prophet; but all this in the service of the beast, all whose power he exercises in its presence, and causes man to make an image to it, and forces his adoration, or at least submission to it. It is Satan's power in full energy, in the form of a false Christ and prophet, but who maintains the authority of the throne Satan has set up. I do not doubt the centre of the false prophet's work is in Judah. I do not say exclusively. Such are the formal instruments of evil.

Next, we have God's workings in the midst of all this. First, the faithful remnant of Judah, who have known how to suffer like the Lamb during the power of him who had His appearance. It is not yet Solomon glory, but David on Zion between Shiloh and the temple, as in Chronicles, and those who have suffered with him there. Hence they have not their name, as children, but His Father's name who had been faithful to Him in His life, so suffering; and counted on His name in their measure, as Christ had. These were not in heaven, but associated as an anticipative remnant with all Christ's glory when He takes it, like David's worthies, not entering into it when it is taken, but with Him into it in its fullest display on earth, with Him the Lamb in His earthly royal state wherever He goes; and this being sovereign grace, they can catch the heavenly air they are so near to, though they are not in heaven. These first secured in their place as ever, the gospel of God's creation-glory and swift-coming judgment is sent forth—a last message, that man may escape, as Psalm 96. Then the fall of Babylon is announced; then the final solemn warning against the

beast: and then it is announced that it is closed, and the dying in the Lord are thenceforth happy. None are now to be thus put to death, for all is now turned. And the harvest or distinctive judgment, where the good are spared, and the vintage, where it is all destruction of the apostate Judaism, take place. Much of this last may have even had the form of Christianity (for aught I know it is probable); but it is now idolatrous apostate Judaism.

This wholly closes this part of the scene. The proper judgments of God in the earth, which fill up His wrath, are given as a description apart. Chapters 11-14, were all in connection with Jerusalem and the Jews, though there were agents whose actings perhaps extended beyond it; but the subject of the chapters, the guiding key of intelligence, is their connection with God's purposes as to the Jews and Jerusalem.

These chapters are not so. We return to the present judgments of God in the earth on the general state of an apostate world, with its particular results and features. Hence we have no longer the ark of the covenant, but the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. The throne exercises its power according to the righteous testimony of God; but there is no question of covenant. The typical features are used of the temple. Those who would not worship the beast are seen on a sea of glass mingled with fire. They had been purified with the moral power of the word, but accompanied by tribulations—they had passed through the fire. Now they were seen triumphant on unchangeable purity before God. It is well to remark, that chapter 15 is in no way the historic continuance of chapter 14 which had closed with the winepress judgment. It returns back to recount the judgments that fall on the Gentile part of the

wickedness, beginning as ever by setting the saints in resulting triumph, so as to assure their hearts through it all. They sing somewhat as Israel at the Red Sea. The judgment is made manifest; but also how true these ways of judgment are of Him whom they characteristically own here as the King of nations! It will be found, as before in the trumpets, that the four great symbols and indeed real sources of prosperity are smitten (only in a much severer way, and with especial application to the kingdom of the beast)— the earth, sea, rivers, and sun. It was the wrath and vengeance of God Almighty. The fifth comes closer. The vial is poured on the throne of the beast; and darkness and anguish seize on his kingdom, but without repentance; and final judgment is prepared. On the sixth vial being poured out, the Euphrates is dried up. The barrier of the beast's empire is destroyed; but I am not prepared to say who the kings, from the rising of the sun, are, if it be more than laying open the empire to the inroads of the powers beyond. After this, three unclean spirits (Satan's direct blasphemous rebellious power, that of the empire raised up in the latter day, and the false prophet of Judaism) assemble the kings of the prophetic world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Armageddon alludes, I suppose, to Judges 5:19, 20. The Lord now, too, as a warning recalls to those that have ears to hear His thief-like coming on the world. The seventh angel pours out his vial in the air (the universally pervading influence that men inhale and live by), the signs of God's terrible power break forth, and such convulsion of all established on earth as never had been known. The great Gentile city is divided into three parts. The city embraces, I apprehend, the whole organised civil relationship of the western Gentile world. Elsewhere

this, as independently constituted, came to nothing; and Babylon, the Roman system and influences and order, came up before God for wrath, for hitherto it had subsisted. Judgment severe and terrible fell on men from God; but they only blasphemed the more.

Thereupon, we have the description and judgment of Babylon. All this is the judgment of God, not of the Lamb, and precedes His manifestation on earth. Rome had long carried on her idolatrous intercourse on earth, and exercised her influence over the nations, and had her dalliance with the kings of the earth. Every adulterous departure from God in associating the church with the world, was her daughter. Her system had been sustained by and ministered to every luxury, and the sale of everything; but what characterised her was spiritual fornication and idolatry. “The beast which was and is not,” I take to be a characteristic name, not designating any given epoch. “The beast that was, is not, and shall be present” is the revived Roman empire; but in this last character it is entirely from beneath; and we recognise the one that slew the witnesses at the beginning of the three years and a half, the same as the first beast of chapter 13, but there as the established power of Satan on the earth, here in association with corrupt Babylon. Thus, here accordingly we have the ten kingdoms who received their power during the same period with the beast, as there they were crowned during his existence. But at last they all hate Babylon, and burn her with fire; the corrupt idolatrous system is insupportable.

Note, the false prophet subsists in the same period with Babylon—a remarkable fact as to the state of things at that time. But the false prophet subsists after Babylon is totally destroyed—a strong evidence, be it said, in

passing, that it is a different order of things. The city is, I doubt not, Rome.

All the rest now flows easily on. After the judgment of the great whore, long falsely calling herself the church, left to the rage of those she had long imposed on, room was made for the manifestation of the true. The marriage of the Lamb takes place, not the rapture, but the full union of Christ and the church, at the same time that the reign of the Lord God Almighty is celebrated. Those called to assist at the festival of the Lamb's marriage-supper are noted as blessed: I suppose rather a different class from the wife—what, I am not prepared to say; but it is a time of blessedness, and blesses all who are near it, or under its influence. Subsequently to this heaven is opened (for the church's place with Christ was within); and the Lord comes forth on the white horse of victory, and the saints with Him, and the judgment is executed on the beast, and the false prophet, and on their armies. The two are cast alive into the lake of fire—terrible counterpart of the Enochs and Elijahs of old, and plainer even its result.

The next step is the binding of Satan in the bottomless pit; this closes all that part of judgment. Verse 4 begins that of another character, and not following the order of time—the judgment of the throne, not as making war, but as ruling. In principle this continues till the great white throne has pronounced its fiat. But here on these millennial thrones the saints are associated. It is not precisely here the royal priests surrounding the throne, and worshipping, but thrones of judgment, such as Daniel 7 alludes to. We have, in general, the thrones; and as it might have been supposed that the beheaded, whom we have seen under the altar, and the persecuted

of the beast, had lost their share, they are specifically named as found alive, though the body might have been killed; and they live and reign with Christ. Satan is let loose, that the inhabitants of the millennial earth may/ be put to the test, and alas! found to be men; and then the close in Christ's final judgment of the dead, and all things new.

From verse 9 (chap. 21), we have the connection of the heavenly Jerusalem with the earth during the millennium, including its own blessedness from which the blessing flowed; and the book is closed by warnings of Christ's coming to those concerned in the prophecy, "to every man," and then by the revelation of Himself to the church, which awakens her desire that He come, with her possession of the living water of grace meanwhile; to which He answers with the assurance, that He comes quickly, and the prophet adds his "Amen."

103 The jasper is used in the city which had the glory of God, as light, strength, and security. Sardius was the last (the omega) of the foundations, as the jasper was the first (the alpha).

104 It also had the precious stone character.

105 In general, the eyes are seen in providential government (2 Chron. 16:9), subsequently established in the foundation of the Lord's seat in the temple of Jerusalem in the millennium (Zech. 3:9; 4:10), and here exercised by the Lamb, as having the fulness of the Spirit in this character.

106 Compare Matthew 24. Though it is probable that part of it may be more general, at any rate it is the same thing.

107 Some persons lay great stress on the adjectives coming after the substantives, “the tribulation, the great,” without reason, I judge. The adjective is more emphatic, in my judgment, when it comes before than when it follows, which is very natural, the strong expression coming first: still, I judge, it is the great.

108 The Jews are not necessarily a publicly redeemed people, because God deals with them emphatically. They may be in captivity as in Egypt, and in apostasy with a remnant as in Elias’ case, and yet God, in a certain sense, owns and deals with them. And this is just the case here. Still it is an immense change to begin thus again with the Jews. It is just introduced to connect it with its place in the general history before the final actings of the seventh trumpet; in what follows it is the grand scene and subject of these latter. See note page 32.

Remarks On The Seven Churches

I have a few remarks to make on the churches. The object in view being their judgment, it is not the power which produced blessing that is presented to us; but the state in which the church is found when the blessing produced has been left in men's hands, as an effect—the state after the spiritual energy has been at work. Another thing it is well to remember—that a previously described state does not necessarily cease to exist because a new one is introduced. The church has lost its first love, though much else has come in since. Jezebel has not ceased to exercise her pernicious influence because Sardis has a name to live and is dead.

The next thing I would remark is, that when judgment is to happen to one of the churches (and so is pronounced on the state which that church represents), in the execution of it, the saints, where they are distinguished, are necessarily to be considered apart from the threatened evil-doers, and the time of the punishment of the latter is not in the period pointed out in the address to the church as such. These remain for the execution of the judgment after the encouraged saints are gone, and may be a carcase carrying its former name, but a mere carcase with no life at all. Thus, in Thyatira certain are reserved for great tribulation, and certain to be killed by the retributive justice of God; but under what circumstances is not stated. The saints will be gone before the execution of this judgment: so that it is not in the mixed body to which the Lord's given judgment applies. This modifies extremely the historical accomplishment of the results spoken of in the

threatenings pronounced. This remark, however, I think, does not properly apply to the first three churches: their corporate state is recognised, not as being what it ought to be perhaps, but as existing—as a recognised corporate object. Hence the church, as such, is threatened with the Lord's visitation, and "he that overcometh" is placed after the "he that hath ears." But in Thyatira the faithful are distinguished as "the rest in Thyatira." The church, as a professing body, had lost its corporate witness. Hence the Lord's coming is now put forward as a hope and time of expectation to the faithful, to whom the church was no longer a stay and consolation; and the saints are particularly referred to that. "Hold fast till I come." This is very remarkable, as giving now a hope and stay out of the church to the faithful. The change of "the overcomer "to a place before the warning to hear (that is the comparative individualisation of the latter) accompanies this also, beginning with the church of Thyatira. With Thyatira closes also the application of the characters of Christ found in the things John had seen.

In Sardis, the title of Christ in the church, as holding the seven stars in His right hand, is recognised—that could not be questioned. But after this all the titles are new, to be understood by a distinctive faith, which is the stay and gives its character to the fidelity of the saints who know His name, but which was not what John had seen displayed of Christ as in the midst of the churches. Sardis and Philadelphia both participate in the announcement of the Lord's coming; which, when the church was thoroughly corrupted as at Thyatira, so that the residue were distinguished from the body, is held out

to sustain the faith, and relieve the spirit of those oppressed by the evil.

But then in Sardis the coming is presented in a very different way, from what it is in Philadelphia. Sardis, whose reputation was great, but who was dead in relation with Him who had all the perfections of the Spirit, has her works judged as not perfect before God; and she is threatened with the world's judgment. (Compare i Thessalonians 4; Luke 21:35.) Here we have again to remark, that the judgment of Sardis will be, when all real pretension to be a church had ceased, if even the form be preserved. The few worthy will be in white with Jesus; and, after their taking away, those who had formed part of the body will be judged with the world. In what form they subsist is not said: only we may in general say that it will be as unfaithful in the place they stood in, not as not being in it. (See Matt. 24:50, 51, and chap. 25:30.) In Philadelphia, the church is become a remnant, and the remnant is the church in God's sight. All is encouragement: and though strength be very little, still an open door is there. They will be kept from the hour of temptation which will come on the world; and they are comforted with the assurance that the Lord is coming quickly. It is to them, as waiting for Him, a comfort and a joy. It is the faithful, the feeble awakened remnant at the close, who, entering into the patience of Christ, are comforted by the assurance of their entire separation from the world's lot, not merely in judgment, but in the terrible tribulation coming. They would be entirely out of the time even in which it would be. But Christ is not yet come.

In the Laodicean church, Christ alone takes the character of "Amen" to promise, and "faithful and true"

—promise, and the name in which He is to be Head of all things new, soon to be manifested, “the beginning of the creation of God.” (Compare His own titles, Colossians 1.) The church has lost the sense of what Christ is and hence has a good opinion of her own state. And here again the principle previously spoken of applies. The execution of judgment on the persons guilty does not come within the limits of the real existence of that addressed as “the church.” I say this of Laodicea; and it is here the question becomes really important, because the Lord addresses it yet as “church.”

The overcomers have yet a place at least in the throne with Christ. The body had, when addressed, yet the name of a place before God, and was judged by Him as such; but its real state was nauseous to God, and it would be spued out of the Lord’s mouth, utterly rejected as such. This is rather its rejection as in a church-standing than the execution of judgment on those guilty. And this was, in the knowledge of God, its certain portion. Still counsel and warning were addressed to it, till its rejection took place. But the Lord distinguishes the possible remnant that may still linger within, in the patience of His mercy (always unwearied while mercy is possible). But I judge that it is not the resulting judgment on those who refuse the warning and are cast out, but the entire rejection, as disgusting to Christ, from the position in which they stood as a body. A faithful witness could no longer bear such a thing.

This supposes, that after the Sardis state is formed, a Philadelphian body arises, through grace, which is to escape the time of tribulation. The forming of this body, I apprehend, induces a result—the Laodicean state of the public body, which is what Christ will reject, as having to

do with the church, leaving aside the judgment of the guilty after their works. The historical execution of the threatening is not given, any more than the rapture of the faithful, because the message is addressed to the body while it has, as a present thing, the character in which it is addressed, with the consequences of certain conduct: only here the declaration of rejection is unconditional, because already the body was what required that rejection. But I apprehend that the term "after these" supposes the execution of the judgment of spuing out of the mouth, so that nothing is any longer recognised as holding, in any sense, a church-standing before God, when the prophetic declarations as to the judgment of the world begin to take effect. The judgment which the individuals who composed the rejected body will undergo (though, I doubt not, having respect to their previous position; for those who have not professed cannot, for example, be apostate,) depends on the position which they are found in, which is not the proper subject of the judgment of the churches, though the declarations made to Thyatira and Sardis (generally considered, whether great Romish and Protestant bodies) intimate, in some respects, the ulterior consequences of infidelity in those positions respectively.

Seven Lectures On The Prophetical Addresses To The Seven Churches

Editor's Note109

Lecture 1

Before entering into the detail of the addresses to the seven churches, of which it is my purpose to speak, it would be well to say a few words as to the general character of the book in which they are found. It is exceedingly important that we should get a right and distinct apprehension of certain great principles which run through the whole book of Revelation, or we shall not understand what God is spoken of in it as doing. And here, remember that it is from Scripture alone that we gather what the purpose of God is, and what God is about in doing what He does, and in doing it as He does.

The first chapter introduces the whole book. It is a revelation given to Jesus Christ to shew unto His servants things which must come to pass preparatory to the appearing of Christ. It is a wonderful thought that God should make such communications, as is also the way in which He does it. For God cannot write as man does, merely to recount what interests or affects the passions of men. But when God writes, it is in order to bring out something by which to test our souls, and bring them into fellowship with Himself. Take the gospels for instance. They are not written merely to give an historical account of Christ when down here, but to unfold to our souls God’s purposes and ways of grace, in the work and Person of His Son. And it is only as we thus learn what God’s thoughts and ways are, that we are

able to understand what God is doing in any part of His ways.

The book of Revelation is a book of judgment all through. God is revealed in the book, as one about to execute judgment. This applies to the church itself, as seen in chapters 2 and 3. It is seen on the earth—subject to judgment. The prophecy may speak of the things which are under judgment, and of the means by which judgment may be averted; but still it is all through judicial, if we except the description of the glorious state of the church as the heavenly Jerusalem. But, even so, it is the case even as regards the church, when active, as she appears on white horses in chapter 19. Until we get hold of this truth clearly in our minds, the intention of the book can never be understood.

Then, again, we do not find the name of Father in this book in connection with the saints. The Father is spoken of in connection with Christ (chap. 2:27; chap. 3:5, 21), but this only confirms the remark in the text. It is used also in chapter 14:1, where the name of the Lamb's Father is written on the foreheads of the hundred and forty-four thousand, and even then it is His Father, though His name be on their foreheads; neither is there the relationship of the bride, the Lamb's wife, until the marriage of the Lamb is spoken of as taking place. The system and relationships in the book of Revelation are of another character altogether. It is God dealing with what is on the earth, according to the responsibility. This simple thought prevents very many mistakes. And further, it is not only judicial in its character, but judgment connected with the earth—that is, that men are responsible upon earth for that which is committed to their trust. So that, if even the church is spoken of in

this book as being on the earth, its responsibility is the subject spoken of, and as such it comes under judgment. Thus you get the earth as its subject.

The next important remark is, that the whole character of the book is prophetic. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy.” And even when the seven churches are addressed, the language is prophetic. It is not so in the various epistles in the previous part of the New Testament. They are communications addressed to the churches or saints, directing their present conduct in the relationship in which God in grace had set them with Himself and the Lord Christ.

I say these addresses are prophetic; that is, they are the announcement of results and consequences which would come upon those to whom they apply, as forming a public body, in the way of judgment—not the ministration of grace and direction in a sure and subsisting relationship as to which no change is suffered. It is not a present blessing intended for the speaker, and those who would receive it at the time as having ears to hear. We see this same difference in the Old Testament prophets and in the prophetic passages scattered through the epistles. If you look into 1 Peter 1:11, 12, you will see what I mean. “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things.” This is the proper character of prophecy. It is addressed to one and intended for others. It does not say, as the Holy Ghost in the epistles—“us”; it is a revelation of things future. A prophet did not prophesy about himself. The Spirit of Christ reveals to the prophet things about others, and not about Himself. The difference afterwards is, that these same things

were reported to the saints by them that had preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When the Holy Ghost is speaking in the saints, He reveals the things of which He speaks as belonging to themselves; and therefore it is that when the Holy Ghost speaks in the saints, He constantly says “us.” We do not find this little word “us” in the same connection anywhere in the Old Testament. “He hath loved us and washed us” — “to the glory of God by us” — “who hath blessed us”— “according as he hath chosen us”— “having predestinated us” — “who hath delivered us” — “and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” It is not merely shewing things to come. When the Holy Ghost shews any of the things of Christ, He includes all saints — “that we may be able to comprehend with all saints.” In a word, the Holy Ghost, thus speaking takes in all saints, as now associated in the blessing, and appropriates all that God has given us “in Christ Jesus.” Only it is not all enjoyed yet, so that we have still to hope to the end “for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

We have here three steps: first, the Spirit of prophecy in times past ministering in the prophets not unto themselves; secondly, the Holy Ghost sent down to announce the salvation; thirdly, He becomes the seal, the earnest, the anointing, by which our portion is known and enjoyed, as the Spirit of expectancy, because while here in the body we have not actually got that we shall have. We have the earnest, but we wait for the adoption, to wit, “the redemption of the body.” Still, the Spirit of God, as dwelling in the church, in His proper church character, gives the consciousness of the present

enjoyment of what He reveals in those two emphatic words “us” and “we.”

We saw very lately, in speaking on Hebrews 9, that at the end of the age Christ was taken up into heaven, and while He is up there, before He returns to this earth again, a work is going on by the Holy Ghost, a body is being gathered and associated with Him—the Head in heaven at God’s right hand, as in Psalm no. “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.” In virtue of the Head being thus exalted to the right hand of God, He sends down the Holy Ghost to gather a body to be identified with Him in glory, to have the same glory as Himself, to be members of His flesh and of His bones. Here is the proper church character of the Spirit; not prophecy, not the communication of what is to happen on earth to others, but the seal, earnest, and assurance of blessings which are our own, testifying how God hath blessed us—not somebody else—and abiding with us till Christ come. Then, blessed be God, there is not a particle of the precious dust of His redeemed that will be left behind; for “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” and Christ will take the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, to the fullest enjoyment with Himself for ever.

When the Spirit of God comes to be a prophetic Spirit, it is quite a different thing. His testimony must be applied to an earthly thing. He never prophesies about heaven. If the Holy Ghost comes and says, All the glory in heaven is yours, this is not a prophecy of some event—i.e., a revelation. In one sense we are there. We realise our fellowship in heavenly places, while waiting down here for the accomplishment of all to take place, waiting for the redemption of the body.

But when I come down to the earth to think of the earth, even if I have to deal with the church, however sure its everlasting privileges viewed in its true character, it is before me as a responsible body on the earth—"the things which are" responsible according to the measure of the privileges in which it is left down here.

And it is of the last importance to keep fast hold of this truth, or we shall not understand the actings of God. The Holy Ghost dwelling in the church associates me with Christ. If righteousness is the question, I am the righteousness of God in Him; if life, He is my life; if glory, lie says, "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." All that He has is ours, save and except His Godhead, in which there is no need of course to say that He is, as regards us, alone.110 All that Christ has belongs to me, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Prophecy could not deal with this, for it was a mystery, hid from ages and generations, hid in God; but by the Holy Ghost it has now been told out that the living church is in living union at this present time with Christ, at God's right hand in heaven—Christ, the Head, in heaven—the church, the members, on the earth. The Old Testament saints could not talk about a man in heaven having members on the earth. Members on the earth would have had no meaning for them; and Christ must have been rejected from the earth before I could talk of His being as the Head in heaven, having members on the earth. When I get down to prophecy, then I get the church let into the knowledge of what God is going to do on the earth.

When the churches are addressed in Revelation 2 and 3, the Spirit never speaks of grace flowing down from the Head to the members of the body; and even when we

see the saints on high, they are presented, not as one body, but as separate worshippers, having an object in heaven to worship, kings and priests to God. Indeed, the Spirit does not speak of the church as the body of Christ in these addresses, but of certain companies in certain circumstances, and not as members of a body, nor of the living power of grace working down here to produce blessing; but of the conduct of those who have enjoyed the advantages of this grace when they had been set in this place of blessing. It does not speak of what the church is, but of what the church has done. It is not the church's condition as set in grace by the power of the Holy Ghost (for the Holy Ghost which had put them there is not spoken of as working, or dwelling in them); it is the church's responsibility. You will not find all through, as I said before, the Father's love to the children, nor yet the Holy Ghost, as the soul (so to speak) of the body, linking it to the Head, nor the power of grace, of which the marriage of the Lamb is the grand result. But it is the church in a given condition on the earth, subject to judgment. There is nothing here about union with Christ. But we find this—the testimony of what Christ is to each state of things spoken of—His present judgment of which He reveals. This makes it very simple and easy of apprehension, and also full of profit to our souls in the way of warning; while the privileges in which we are set are the spring of all blessing, which makes it so true that "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

But what we do get in Revelation 1:1 is very precious and full of instruction. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." Now this,

evidently, is not Christ as the Head of the body in heaven, the Holy Ghost working in the members, to edify that body. In the epistles that relationship and position are clearly brought out. But here it is the revelation which God gave to Christ to shew (not to the sons, but) to His servants things which must shortly come to pass. Again, this is not the Holy Ghost, as in the epistle to the Ephesians, bringing down instruction to the children and the bride, and shewing them their relationships to the Father and the Bridegroom, but it is a revelation to servants of things that are coming to pass on the earth, “and he sent and signified it by an angel.” The ministration of angels thus comes in, shewing the prophetic character of this passage. Observe, further, that this is not the unfolding of the riches of Christ Himself by the Holy Ghost, but a message by an angel. Verse 2, “Who bare record “—not of fellowship in Christ, or of the fulness of Christ—but “of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The testimony of Jesus Christ is not His fulness, but His witness borne to something else. And mark here how we have now got down to events on the earth (and these are never the fulness of Christ in heaven); we must get our minds clear on this point. Verse 3. Then there is the promised blessing to those that read and hear this prophecy.

Verse 4. “Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.” The grace and peace here are not from the Father and the Son, but from Jehovah. The salutation, especially as regards the Holy Ghost, is not the same thing as in 2 Corinthians 13:14, although, no doubt, the seven Spirits allude to the Holy Ghost, the number seven being the symbol of

perfection in its diversified power. The title here given to the Spirit is in connection with the display of the power and intelligence with which the earth is governed. (Compare chap. 5:6.)

Verse 5. “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.” “And from Jesus Christ” —Christ is the last mentioned of the three, as shewing how entirely He is brought out here in connection with the government of the earth. “The faithful witness “—the one who infallibly shewed out what God is, and indeed all truth, when He was on the earth. “The first begotten from the dead” —this is the power of the resurrection “from the dead” down here. “The Prince of the kings of the earth”—His place in power over all dominion here below, a place He has yet to take as to actual possession of it. He is not here called “the Son of the Father,” nor yet spoken of as the Head of the body, the church; nor yet as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, but as the Prince of the kings of the earth, thus shewing that it is simply His connection with the earth that is taken up here.

But then, mark, the moment Christ is mentioned, how the heart of the church goes out with the joy of its own proper and personal relationship with that Christ: “unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” This never fails; when Christ is spoken of, no matter what the subject is, He is still our Christ, with whom we are livingly associated, so that it is impossible to hear His name only without its drawing forth the response of the soul, and the acknowledgment of what Christ is to it. If I think of the judgment even,

and of Him as the Judge, I say, “I am associated with Him”; in all things He is my Christ. If in this life the wife of some eminent man saw him coming, she would naturally say, There comes my husband, because her own relationship is in her thoughts, and first in them. So of the church with Christ, whatever character He is revealed in. So it is at the end of the book, when the prophetic part is closed, we find another response of the same kind; the moment He says, “I am the bright and morning star,” instantly the church responds according to her hope in Him, and says, Come. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” And so should it ever be with us: Christ Himself should be filling up every thought and affection of the heart. It is just this that gives its value to every character of testimony to Christ, to every part of His glory. That which concerns Christ concerns me, whatever the immediate subject may be. If my heart is occupied with Himself who possesses the coming glory, unless I find Him in the glory, the glory itself would be nothing to me. I always want something that concerns Christ; and because it concerns Christ, it must necessarily concern me. It is perfectly true that some subjects, even connected with our Lord, are more interesting than others, and that in proportion as they bring us into closer connection with Himself.

The crown of Jesus in that day will be composed of many diadems, and each one, though worn in respect of others than the church, will form part of our joy, because part of His glory, for we should be unhappy if we thought He could lose any part of His crown and glory. Our joy does not only consist in the knowledge of individual salvation, as our individual salvation is not the end of our joy. Although, blessed be God, it is the beginning to us, there

is not one thing, however apparently disconnected with it, that can ever lose its value in the eyes of a saint, viewed in its connection with the glory of Christ. We may see this carried out at the deathbed of a Christian; if Christ Himself has been his joy, all that belongs to Him will be precious. If the soul has been merely occupied with the work of Christ, in bringing salvation to itself, there will be peace, because it knows salvation; but if the Person of Christ has become the object of affection and the soul is occupied with Himself, such a one has a constant spring within of joy, as well as settled peace; for when Christ is the personal object to the soul, it possesses a joy which the mere fact of knowing we are saved (blessed as it may be) will not continuously give. If Christ fill the heart, it will not be merely that I am happy because I am saved, but the thought of Him to whom I am going will fill my soul with joy. It is true that I am going to heaven, but the thought that makes heaven a heaven to my soul is, that Christ Himself is there; there is some one to go to. The Person I have loved on earth, I am going to be with in heaven. And thus it is always expressed in Scripture. For the spirit, it is departing and being with Christ.

From the very beginning of the book the church is put in a separate place; her priestly place is in heaven (outside the sphere of the action of this book, or rather inside, within the veil) above, in the place from whence the book came. Such, then, as speaking on earth in verse 5, are the church's thoughts— "unto him that loved us." There is no question of judgment: He "hath loved us"; no uncertainty as to condition: He hath "washed us from our sins in his own blood." The believer's place is no longer a question when the prophetic witness of the

book begins. Christ hath died and is risen again, “and hath made us kings and priests,” which titles we get without our responsibility bringing them into question. Responsibilities we have, but Jesus hath washed us, and we are conscious of the place in which we are set, having the answer of the heart in which the Holy Ghost dwells.

The place of the church is unquestionably settled before anything else is unfolded. This same principle is more elaborately brought out in Ephesians 1. The church is first of all placed in the very same acceptance that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is, before it is shewn the “mystery of his will.” This is not prophecy, but the church being placed, as Christ Himself, to be the reflection of His glory. First, thus “accepted in the beloved,” God then, in the aboundings of His grace in wisdom and prudence towards her, lets her into the secret of His thoughts and purposes as to the glory of Christ, in gathering together in one all things in Him.

The Spirit closes it all with an Amen, and now begins with the earth, and speaks of the effect of Christ’s coming on the inhabitants of it.

Verse 7. “Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Not so the church. I am not going to wail when I see Christ. Ah! how my face will brighten when I first get a glimpse of Him; though, alas! if our affections are not right, it cannot be a present joy to think of being caught up to meet Him. And here I would ask, Is there anything allowed that would make you wish the Lord’s coming delayed, any mere natural affection even that comes in, turning the eye and the heart away?

If the heart is wrapped up in Christ, and we feel what it is to be in such a world, not of toil merely, but of sin, what a thought to be with Christ out of it! Surely there is not a chord in the heart of the saint that does not vibrate exactly contrary to the feelings of those whose eyes shall see Him and wail! And yet the positive hope, the joy of seeing and being with Himself, is a yet fuller and more abiding source of joy than deliverance itself. When I say, “Every eye shall see him,” then it is wailing with the poor world; but when I say, “My eye shall see him,” then every feeling of my soul will bound up with joy—the very opposite of wailing. Am I looking even only to be spared? Did not Christ say, “I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself? “which was really saying, “This world is not good enough for you; I cannot stay with you here, where sin and sorrow are stamped on all around; but when the place is prepared, I will come and take you to be with me where I am.” What an entire difference between the two aspects of the coming of the Lord!

Verse 8. After seeing His glory and dominion we get the glory of His Person, “The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending”—the Almighty. It is not the Father here. What a difference between looking for what the Almighty One will do upon the earth, and being taken up to my Father’s house and talking of what my Father is for us there!

There are three great names in which God reveals Himself to man. Firstly, to Abraham, in Genesis 17: “I am the Almighty God [El Shaddai], walk before me and be thou perfect.” It was like saying, I am the Almighty: therefore do thou trust in me. What is called perfection is a response to the character in which God is revealed

to us. “He suffered no man to do them harm, and reproved even kings for their sakes,” Psalm 105:14.

Secondly, when He comes to Israel He takes another name. In Exodus we find Him revealing Himself to them as Jehovah, the ever-existing One, going on to accomplish all His promises.

Thirdly, to the saints now, it is as Father. They are taken into connection with the Almighty and Eternal Jehovah, in the relationship of children to a father, in the enjoyment of eternal life imparted to them. “I will be a Father unto you … saith the Lord Almighty.” Hence we cannot answer to this revelation but by the spirit of adoption, and being really children, and possessing the nature and Spirit of Him who is our Father. Hence it is not said, as in the case of the titles, Almighty and Jehovah, “Be ye perfect with”; but when the Father’s name is revealed, which Christ has done, “Be ye perfect as.” We do not trust Him as strangers; we walk with and like Him as children. So that it is as Father that we know Him, who is Almighty; and Christ says, it is eternal life to know the Father and Himself. Again, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”; and again, “He that killeth you will think that he doeth God service; and this they will do, because they have not known the Father nor me.” They think they are serving God when they are killing God’s children; but the Father and the Son they do not know. We have seen that this title of “Father” is not that in which God is revealed in the Revelation; He is in those of Almighty and Jehovah.

Verses 9-13. “I John … was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Mark again, here, the character that

Christ takes in connection with the seven churches, as well as with the world. It is not as the Head of the body, as the source of grace to His members below, but as one walking in the midst of something outside Himself, and pronouncing His judgment on their external state. Verse 13. We see, though Christ here is revealed as the Son of man, He is also Jehovah, and bears all the characteristics of the Ancient of days in Daniel 7. “His head and his hairs were white like wool.” In Daniel, the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days. In Revelation111 1:14, He is shewn as Himself the Ancient of days, “His eyes were as a flame of fire “to pierce into the heart in judgment. “God is a consuming fire.” “And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword”—thus holding all authority with the sword of judgment.

Verses 17, 18. “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. He saith unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.” It is wondrously encouraging to the soul to think that He that is divine, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, besides whom there is no God, is the very One who went down under the power of death for my sins, and then, by rising again without them, has not only for ever put away every sin, but has delivered me from him who had (and justly too) the power of death, that is, the devil, and brought me up into the very presence of God. He “once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” It is this which gives such settled peace to the soul; for if I have come to God, I have nothing more to seek. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” If my soul has seen Christ dying on the cross for its sins, I have met God there also in the solemn question of

judgment; and then I have come to God through a dead and living Christ; and having come to God Himself, I have got all that earth below or heaven above can give me. For this meekest, this lowliest One, who was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, is the very God to whom I have been brought, and that now without the least spot of sin which could make me ashamed in His presence, so that I am with Him in perfect love, all cause of fear being for ever removed; and He lives to reveal Himself to us in the power of an endless life.

Verse 19. To return to the prophetic part—we get here what is very important: the three great parts of the Book of the Revelation very distinctly stated. First, “the things which thou hast seen” —that is, Christ walking among the candlesticks. Secondly, “the things which are” —the time condition, or external state of the churches, or professing church on earth; not the eternal state and unchangeable privileges of the church, as the body of Christ. Thirdly, “the things which shall be hereafter”112 —the prophetic things, the closing events in dealing with the world.

Chapter 4 shews the church in heaven. In speaking of the things that are, I do not (because Scripture does not) in any way allude to the eternal state of the church in its union with Christ, as its Head in grace, but to a time condition, an external state, of the church considered as responsible here below during a given period; and this time condition, this external state, judged in the seven churches. Again, I repeat, it is not our “spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” that are spoken of here, but that in the midst of which Christ is walking, outside Himself on the earth. On earth He needs a candlestick—a light; not so in heaven, there is no need

of a candlestick there—no candle there to give light, “for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” But on earth He needs light-bearers, and therefore the character of candlesticks is given to the seven churches—to be the “light of the world.” They are lighted from heaven, to give light on the earth, in the dark places below—to bear testimony to Christ, while He is away in heaven, hid in God. And it is to test these light-bearers, that Christ walks as the Son of man amidst the candlesticks. It is true that our life is hid with Christ in God; but while walking on the earth, we are to shine as lights in the world, the displayers of what heaven can produce—to be living in heaven while walking on the earth; as Jesus spoke of Himself when on the earth, “the Son of man which is in heaven.”

Verse 20. “The mystery of the seven stars” gives the thought of power—subordinate power, and the angels113 are the symbolical representatives of the churches. Spiritual power, as representing Christ on earth, was what the church might have displayed. Throughout Scripture, superior power is symbolised by the sun, and subordinate power by the stars. The angel of anything means the representative of that which was not itself in presence there, as even the angel of Jehovah. So when Peter knocked at the door, it was said “This is his angel”; and of children, “their angels.” For an illustration of what I mean, when Jacob had met the angel at Peniel, it is said, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed, but he called the place “the face of God.” So Moses was with the angel in the bush. And in this way we have the angels of the seven churches.

Let us now take up the general idea. We have seen that we have not the church looked at here, as in union with

Christ its Head; nor seen in its proper heavenly character (although that should be manifested by it), but in its time state, as under the eye of the Lord for judgment. Instead of Christ as the Head of the body, what is set forth here are the responsibilities attaching to the body in its time state, and certain conduct expected for privileges received. Nor is it the giving of these privileges, but the use we have made of these privileges which is treated of. Let us look at particular times of blessing to the church in illustration of this. The Reformation, for instance, was a work of God's Spirit; and God comes, as it were, looking to see what man has done with this His working—how men have used the blessing they then got through the revival of His truth, judging what use they are making of privileges then given them. What comes out of the three hundred years elapsed since the Spirit of God worked so mightily? The work of His own Son, the gospel of His grace, justification by faith, was, we know, that which then came out to light. What has this resulted in in the professing church? It is as though He had said, "What more could be done? I sowed good seed, I planted a choice vine, and now I have come for fruit; and where is it?" None of the seven churches consequently is viewed as the work of God in itself. What takes place is a judicial investigation, and God is not judging His own work (I need scarcely say), but man, on the ground of responsibility, according to that which he has received through that work.

I see in Scripture a complete and very definite distinction in speaking of the church of God. The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, was the testimony of the prophets before the Holy Ghost

was sent down. Christ said, “On this rock I will build my church”; it was not yet formed. We do not get Christ as the Head in heaven, until redemption is an accomplished thing; I am not here speaking of individual salvation, but of the body of Christ. In Stephen we get another step: a man on earth, filled with the Holy Ghost, sees heaven opened, and the Son of man at the right hand of God. In Paul, again, is a yet further point—that is, union with Christ. Christians are members of Himself, and this is not merely by participation in His nature, partakers of the divine nature, but by the power in which He was raised, union by the Holy Ghost to Himself the Head: “Why persecutest thou me?” If my hand is hurt, I say I am hurt, for my hand is a part of me. But then there is another character which this body consequently has, it is “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Now the church being the place where God dwells, and set on the earth for the manifestation of God’s glory, God then comes to judge what the fruit of these privileges has been when put into man’s hand. It is not the fact of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church that is spoken of here, but the use that men have made of it.

There are two principles on which God always judges His people: first, their original state, the point from whence there has been departure, the blessing He began with; secondly, that point to which His ways are tending—the hope set before His people—the fitness for the blessing with which He is going to meet them at the close, on the manifestation of His presence.

We may take Israel, by way of example, as shewing out the principle. In Isaiah 5 God says, “What could have been done more for my vineyard that I have not done in

it? “And then in chapter 6, where the glory of the Lord is seen, its manifestation proved, not only that the state of Israel did not answer to the blessing conferred upon them at starting (for Isaiah says, “I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”), but that their state was not suited to the glory to which the Lord had taught them to look forward. The remnant according to grace are always preserved, while the rest are judged.

But to return to the condition of the church: the Lord first shews the privilege He has given, and then asks if the walk has been according to it; as He says to the Ephesian Church, Have you left your first love? Yes, you have. “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen.” “I have loved you, and given myself for you,” was the just measure of the love to Him, in which they should have walked, as “the church of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own”—put under the guardianship of the blood as to all holy conversation, as seen in type in the priests. The blood was put on the hand, the foot, and the ear, both of the leper to be cleansed and of the priest at his consecration, so that nothing dishonouring such a guardianship was to be allowed. Then comes the question, Have we acted according to the blood that has been put upon us? has nothing passed in mind, act, or walk, but what has been according to God? The Lord always exercises judgment in a church, though He has long patience with it. He shewed His long-surffering toward Israel for more than seven hundred years after He had pronounced judgment by the mouth of Isaiah, and God never lowers the standard of the claims of His first blessing, though He may be patient when His people fail.

To Sardis He says, “I have not found thy works perfect before God”; yet how low was it fallen! We may bow ourselves before the Lord under failure, but though we always find that grace which lifts us up again, still God never lowers the standard of what ought to be produced, nor could we even desire that God should. No true saint could desire that He should lower the standard of His holiness in order to let us into heaven.

I could not accept (through grace) anything short of the picture of the church as God first gave it. Take even man as man: alas! I have lost innocence; but can I accept any standard lower than the total absence of sin? Nor is this all; for God now raises up a more excellent object of desire before my heart, in which He replaces what is lost by the full revelation of Himself, His own glory in His people. Hence the saint has to judge his state, not by that from which Adam fell, nor even by the first state of the church only, but by the Christ he has to meet.

There are thus two ways in which God is judging: the departure from the first condition of blessing; and then how far the fulness of the blessing to which God is calling us is met. Thus it is by our past blessing and our future blessing that God judges us. As we see in all the addresses to the churches their departure from original blessings, and the enquiry how far their present condition corresponds with the blessing to which they are called, and which is spoken of in promise. Paul could say, “This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, I press toward the mark”: when a man can say this, then his conscience is good and happy with God in view of the glory before him. But this I would desire to press on all your souls—that your standard is wrong, and your affections are wrong, if you are doing anything

but following the Christ of glory presented to the eye of your heart. You know well the church has not kept its first love. O remember that though He is patient, He cannot lower the standard, and therefore “repent.” There is abundant grace to lift up and to restore; but my conscience could not be happy if God lowered the picture He has given me of the church.

Man has lost innocency; but blessing has come in by the cross, and though I have not attained the glorious result of that redemption manifested in the glory of Him that accomplished it, “I press toward the mark”; my conscience could not be happy otherwise. Suppose the thought of the Lord’s coming to receive us to glory were very present to us, how many things would disappear! How many objects that we now cling to, how many sorrows and cares that burden us, would be nothing, were the hope of His coming steadily before our eyes! “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

But the church has lost her first love, and has also lost her expectation. The hope of the Lord’s coming makes Him very present to our souls, so as to judge the condition in which we are. You are called to meet Jesus; are you in such a position as would make you ashamed before Him at His coming?

There is also, I may add, another principle which is a motive to holiness in the church, the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is said, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” Do not do anything inconsistent with His presence any more than with the glory to which you are going, of which He is the witness. In the first three churches there is no reference to the Lord’s coming; but after that

time, when failure had completely set in, then the Lord's coming is the thought presented. It is our joy and our hope, to sustain us when all else fails.

I would just recapitulate what I have said. The character of the book of Revelation is prophetic. We do not at all see the church here, as indwelt by the Holy Ghost, giving the knowledge of Christ as the Head of the body, or fellowship with the Father and the Son. All is judicial. Christ is distinctly the Judge, first, of the church, and then of the world— of the church looked at in its earthly condition, of course, not in its heavenly. The whole book is divided into three parts— the things seen, the things-that are, and the things that shall be after them. And, as we have seen, God has two great ways of judging. He sees if we are profiting by the blessings already given, and if we are walking in a way suited to the promised glory.

There is a return in grace expected according to privileges bestowed, and an answer of the heart to the glory He is calling us to. Having blessed us, He expects the response, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." He looks for fruit from His grace towards us, and I am to see unto what I am called by it. Not that I have attained, but I press forward in the power of a new life, "forgetting the things that are behind." God has set His heart upon blessing us in a certain manner; and what He looks for is that our hearts should respond to this knowledge of the heavenly calling.

May we taste now what God has called us to in fellowship with His Son. May it get such hold on our affections that we may be enabled honestly to say, "This one thing I do." The Lord open and fill our eyes with the

glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and cause us to walk in the power of that hope—of seeing Him as He is and being with Him and like Him for ever.

Lecture 2

I was referring, the last time we were speaking, briefly, to the distinctive character of the church of God; and to the character of this book, as being one of judgment, whether as regards the church or the world.

It is important to distinguish between the view of the church of God as a responsible body on the earth, and therefore subject to judgment, and that view of it which looks at it as the body of Christ, and as enjoying her proper place before God, and her privileges as such. We must keep these two truths distinctly and definitely before our minds, or we shall get into confusion.

We saw the last time, that God has given Christ to be "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." God's thought and purpose about the church is, that it should be the body of Christ when He takes dominion over all things. God has exalted Christ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, and, therefore, called "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." All the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ; but this is quite another thing. We are His fulness, that is, we complete the mystic man, Christ being the Head. For the church is that which completes and displays Christ's glory in the world to come; and then there will be not only Christ in heaven, known to the believer, but Christ ruler over the earth, over all things. It is a blessed thought, that it is

not merely God as God who fills all things, but that Christ in redemption and mediatorial fulness in grace and righteousness fills all things. “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” Everything from the dust of the earth up to the throne of God has been the scene of the accomplishment of, and witness to, Christ’s glory. But when He does actually thus “fill all things,” and it is not merely known to faith, it will not be alone, but as the Head of the body which is now being formed, taking the church to share in His dominion and glory. All things will be subject to Him in that day; but the church will be associated with Him. Just as it was in the garden: Adam, the image of Him that was to come, was lord over all the creation; Eve was neither a part of the creation over which Adam reigned, nor yet had she any title of her own over it, but she was associated with him in the dominion. The passage in Ephesians 5 takes up this formation of Eve, and applies it to the church— “this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Christ has every title to this dominion over all things. (See Col. 1.) As God, all.things were created by Him and for Him. And remark, that in the passage He has a double primacy —Head of creation when, as Son, He takes His place in it, for He is Creator; and also Head of the church, for “he is the head of the body the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.”

A second title to headship is, that He is “the Son”—not merely as Creator (as we have seen in Colossians 1, “hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”), but by inheritance also. In Hebrews 1 we find this

counsel and intention of God as regards His Son: “whom he hath appointed heir of all things,” etc. Here Messiah is in contemplation.

A third title to headship is, that He is man. Psalm 8, which celebrates millennial glory, is quoted and applied by the Holy Ghost to Christ in Hebrews 2:6-9, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour,” and all things put under his feet. (See also Ephesians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 15:27.) Thus we see His title to dominion: first, as Creator, “for by him were all things created”; secondly, as the Son, “whom he hath appointed heir of all things”; thirdly, as Man, under whose feet in the counsels of God all things are put. Then, we may add, He cannot take the inheritance as a defiled thing, and, therefore, He has a fourth claim in the way of redemption. His title is to a redeemed and purified inheritance, “the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” With us, who were under sin, alienated in mind by wicked works, it is not merely purifying: guilt also is removed. Then He takes and makes us His body; as it is written, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” The Holy Ghost comes down and consecrates us to be the body of Christ in living power; and in unity, because baptised with the Holy Ghost into one body. Not only is each soul quickened and sealed by the Spirit, but believers are “baptised into one body by one Spirit.” This began at the day of Pentecost, and since then this baptism has been the portion of every believer. It is a great and blessed truth that, however we may have grieved the Spirit, still, individually, the Holy Ghost abides with the believer and reproves him. And it is also most blessed as regards the church, that the Holy Ghost

is not, like the Lord Jesus, only here a little time with His people, and then going away. “He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” And mark this that the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost in the church is in virtue of the redemption which Christ has wrought, and not dependent on our use of the privileges given (though when present His action is according to the use or abuse of these privileges).

The church of God, united to the Lord Jesus Christ, has its place, first, by virtue of Christ’s Person; secondly, in redemption by Christ; thirdly, by the presence of the Holy Ghost. This is not a question of prophecy, but it is the power of divine living grace, putting the church in divine glory. The moment the Holy Ghost thus formed the church, it is treated down here as the body of Christ, “from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” Just as, in the growth of a child, the body is there, and each member is in its place, and it grows up into its full stature.

There are two distinct aspects of the church, however, presented to us in Ephesians 1 and 2—the body of Christ is in heaven, and the habitation of God by the Spirit on earth. This second character of the church is a deeply important one. The church of God, being formed by the Holy Ghost on the earth, necessarily involves the responsibility of the church to manifest upon the earth the glory of Him that set her thus. Responsibility never changes God’s grace. But while the church remains upon the earth, she is responsible for the glory of her absent Head down here—not as under law, of course; but the church is responsible to represent the glory of Him who has redeemed it, and put it here. It is to be a

light in the midst of darkness— “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”; “shewing forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” And, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.” The word is “epistle,” and not “epistles,” of Christ. It is one body—one transcript of Christ. The church was set as Christ’s epistle of commendation to all men, that in it men might read and see the power of redemption, and the character of Him who is out of sight, through the Holy Ghost dwelling in it, and forming it to be the visible witness of its invisible Head. Jesus says, in John 17, “that they all may be one.” And to what end? “That the world may believe [not yet “know” —that is the fruit of the glory] that thou hast sent me.” This should have been the effect of this oneness in reference to the present time. When the church is in manifested glory with Christ, and as Christ, the world must of necessity know that the Father sent the Son; and not only so, but will know that the Father has loved us as He loved Jesus, seeing us in the same glory as Jesus. It must, therefore, be previous to that time, that the world should see the church as one, in order to believe—should see the church in this place of responsibility as this epistle of Christ. Its responsibility is, that the life of the Head in heaven should be manifested on the earth in power. Thus we see what a responsible place it is to be under grace, for it is through our being under such free grace as we are, that our proper responsibility comes in. When we come on this ground of. a responsible body on the earth, we find the Lord, of course, taking cognisance of the actings of the church under this responsibility.

Thus in these two chapters (Rev. 2 and 3) we have the Lord, not as the Head of the body, not as the One from whom grace is flowing down to the members of the body, but walking amidst the candlesticks in the character of a Judge, to see if they are acting according to the grace received. This principle of judgment runs through them all: 'I will give unto every one of you according to the use he has made of the privileges and grace in which the church was at first set.' This is a solemn word for us, just in proportion to our estimation of grace. It is not condemnation as by the law; but the more I understand the love, of which I have failed to testify, the more my heart will be grieved when I do not give a true answer to that grace, for it connects sin, as it were, with God's name, which I bear. The effect of Israel's wickedness did not only prove man to be a sinner, but, God having placed His name there, it connected the sin with the name of God. On this ground it was that the Lord rebuked Israel when He said, "The name of the Lord is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." The testimony of His name was placed in their keeping, and it ought to have been guarded by them. God will know how fully to vindicate His holy name, in the end, on the earth. Still more is this the case in respect of the church of the living God. The world ought to see practically perfect holiness and perfect love in the church: for we are made partakers of God's holiness, and we are the objects of His infinite and perfect love. The church ought to have but one constant position and service on the earth, that of manifesting to the world what it draws from its living Head in heaven. The church never knew Christ after the flesh; the only Christ the church knows is the Christ that the world rejected, and is now in heaven; and therefore the church should be in such

entire abstraction from the world, as to manifest what its Head is. And thus the church should be Christ's epistle of commendation. And note the force of the word "epistle "here. The world ought to see what Christ is in you, as the law was seen written on the tables of stone (2 Cor. 3), a living epistle, "known and read of all men." And the character of our walk will be greatly deepened, according to the extent we are realising what His grace has done for us, and has called us to. Thus we see the Lord never gives up this in principle. He never departs from that into which the church is called in testimony and witness, though He bears with it in patience.

But now we will turn to another point: the use that is to be made of these addresses to the churches. There are two things on the face of the matter. First, it is an historical fact, that there were churches on the earth in the condition here spoken of; then, secondly, that the moral instruction is available to every individual saint—applicable to every person who has an ear to hear and an understanding heart to know the Lord's mind. This is very simple.

But if we go on farther, we shall find that there is significance in the number of the churches that are addressed. The number seven, being the symbol of perfection, is the number often used in this book—seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials. Thus the choice of this number marks the complete circle of God's thoughts about the church, as responsible on the earth according to the grace in which it has been set there. It is not that there were only seven churches or assemblies on the earth at the time these addresses were given, as we know, for instance, of Colosse and Thessalonica, and so many others; but these and all the others were left out,

because they did not furnish the moral elements which were needed by the Holy Ghost for this complete picture.

When thinking of the unity of the body with the Head, we get into privilege, and not responsibility—the life of Christ and the glory of Christ as the measure and the end. But these chapters present the actual and diversified state of the church. The next point is, that these seven churches are taken up distinctively in connection with responsibility; and then, further, they cannot all apply to the whole body at large at one time, because we find such different states among them, and therefore we cannot apply what is said in one of them indistinctively to another, as there are distinctive charges and distinctive promises. We shall find, however, on entering into details, that different parts of the professing church with distinctive characters are spoken of as partially subsisting at the same time. So that we get this: each description does apply, in one sense, to the church at large, yet all do not to the whole church at one and the same time. And therefore you get in these churches, either a successional picture of the condition of the church upon earth, as responsible to God from the beginning to the end of this dispensation, in a prophetical way, or a particular state of a part necessary to complete the whole picture—the different aspects that it has presented in the world until the Lord spues it out of His mouth.

Then, you will say, “How can the church be spued out of Christ’s mouth, when the church is the body of Christ, and must be with Him in the glory?” That is true, if you speak of the body of Christ, but the church as an external body on earth never loses its responsibility,

whatever its characteristics may be. Looked at as on earth, it is responsible for its conduct. If the unworthy servant did not do his master's will, he was to be treated, not as being not a servant at all, but as a hypocrite according to the position in which he was found, though not as being really such, for servant he was none really. It was not said to him, "You are no servant"; but, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness … and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." Thus he was taken up and condemned on the ground of his profession.

So it was with Israel. They were formed by God to bear His name before the world; they failed; they were dealt with as responsible, and were set aside, as looked at under the old covenant. The word to the barren fig-tree was, "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever." The fig-tree might bear leaves, but when the Lord came seeking fruit, finding none, He said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward and for ever… and presently it withered away." Thus Israel, as a vessel to bear God's name unto the world, was set aside; but this did not touch the question of God's faithfulness. He will restore Israel in the last days, and till then grace still flows on, taking up the remnant from among them as the true seed of Abraham, only in better privileges; for if Israel as a whole be set aside, then God sets up the new thing, and out of the Jew and Gentile "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The question here is not as to the certainty of individual salvation, but about the vessel God is using to bear His name before the world. Individuals who believe will go to heaven, but the vessel of testimony, having failed, must be broken. God has long patience with it; but if, after all that has

been done, it only brings forth wild grapes, it must be cut off. Doubtless there is a faithful remnant taken to heaven, but the vessel is cast off as a visible public testimony on the earth.

In Romans n we see how God puts what He has formed at present on the earth to bear His name, in the position of a public visible system on the earth, as He did Israel. “Behold the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off.” God can cast off the professing church in perfect consistency with what He has revealed Himself to be, because it is not a question of His grace and goodness, or of individual salvation, but simply and only of responsibility. And this it is which makes His dealings with these churches a deep and positive warning to us, as the very same principle applies to Gentile as to Jewish testimony. God will accomplish to the very word every promise He has made to Israel. Yet we ail know as a plain fact that God has cast off Israel as visible witnesses to bear His name to the world. And He will, in the same way, cast off the church, if it fails in its responsibility on the earth. Thus we see how God maintains His government in respect to the testimony which His people ought to bear under every dispensation, and that, while individual salvation is for ever secured to individuals in Israel and the church, both will be set aside as to their public visible testimony. Thus we get not only responsibility but the results of failure.

We will now take up the positive example and warning that God gives us in the word to Ephesus. It is of course a great means of strengthening the soul—its being

instructed in the ways and actings of God in the Scriptures; but it is a source of joy to myself to get the immediate application of truth to my own soul. General principles of Scripture are very blessed, but the individual application of truth to the heart and conscience is still more happy.

In these addresses to the churches we have, first, the character of Christ which is always adapted to the state of the particular church. Thus, in the first, to the Ephesians, as a matter of general application we have, “He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”—that is, Christ revealed in the particular character in which He exercises judgment. Secondly, in each church we see the special character of the trials of the faithful. And, thirdly, a special promise is given to sustain the faith of those under the trial. Thus it is all suited grace and mercy to meet the special circumstances. And then, fourthly, looking forward to the time of fullest blessing, we see the portion given “to him that overcometh,” when Christ has taken the saints to Himself.

The churches are divided into two portions; three churches in the first division, and four in the second. This is a point of great interest. The church generally seems to be addressed as such in the first three churches. That is, saints, though having to overcome, are looked at as in the body at large; the little remnant more distinctively apart in the latter four. Thus, through this division also, we get distinctive characteristic parts of the professing church. In the addresses to the first three churches, the exhortation: “He that hath an ear let him hear” —precedes the promises to the faithful overcomers. In the latter four it follows the promises. In

the first three the hearing ear is spoken of in connection with the general testimony to the church before singling out the faithful remnant who overcome. In the last four, the exhortation follows the overcoming. In the first three, also, the coming of the Lord is not spoken of, but for the same reason as for the greater distinction of the remnant. With the fourth, attention is directed to the coming of Christ. This was now the remnant's hope, not the return to primitive order. The public professing body was utterly corrupt.

In the former three, the thoughts of the church are, as it were, called back to the original condition and standing —a condition which was held out as one to which it was possible it might be restored if repentant. We were remarking, in the last lecture, that God had two standards of judgment in dealing with a people placed in responsibility: either the grace which has placed them there, and, therefore, the thought of restoration because of this grace, and according to the standard it has given; or the glory to which they are called. In the first three churches we find the former of these. But in Thyatira another thing comes in. The church as a whole has proved to be in a hopeless condition (I speak of the church in testimony here as a visible body in the world), and then the individual hope is always given, and the address of the Spirit is specially to those that overcome, and, as may be seen, the coming glory at Christ's return held out as the encouragement. And therefore in Thyatira we get this distinctive hope held out to the remnant, "that which ye have, hold fast till I come."

With these general truths I would also remark that in the address to the first church, Ephesus, we see the general character of Christ as exercising judgment,

“holding the seven stars in his right hand “(that is, holding all the authority and all the power), “walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks,” the churches—going round to see whether the lights were burning brightly, giving out that true light which He had lit up.

We see, consequently, in every one of them the peculiar stamp of responsibility. Then, observe how He commences this Ephesian address, by touching upon every point that He can in any way approve of, before He brings out the opposite side of the picture. “I know thy works, thy labour, and thy patience.” What a blessing that He does know all about us, even “the thoughts and intents of the heart!” “Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Now mark another important principle. What must Christ necessarily be jealous about but His love to the church, which was stronger than death? It is utterly impossible that He can forget His love to the church, and therefore just as impossible that He can be satisfied without the return of her love to Him; for, remember, that it is only love that can satisfy love. The very reproach He makes brings out the strength of His love to the church, which cannot rest till it gets the same from her; for He cannot cool down to be satisfied with a feeble return of His love, however much the church may have cooled down in her thoughts about Christ’s love to her. There may be still much outward fruit in “works, and labour, and patience”; but let the toil and labour be what it may, the spring of it all is gone—You have left your first love; there is the great mischief. It is no matter how much you toil and labour, if love to Christ be not the motive of all your service, it will only be, as the apostle

says, “like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,” which dies with the sound thereof.

Here, then, in Ephesus, we get the first great principle of failure, and therefore the great general judgment which came upon the whole church. “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works [see how He brings them back to the point of their departure], or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” He cannot allow that to remain in the world which fails to shew forth the great love wherewith He loved the church; for if He did, He would not be “the faithful and true witness.” This principle of tender, faithful reproach is the blessed proof that His love never grows cold, however much ours may fail.

In this respect the Lord’s way of dealing with individual souls is exactly the same as with the church. He takes notice of all departure from Him, but the door is always open for “repentance,” and when the sin is judged, and seen in the light in which God sees it, then there is nothing to hinder immediate restoration. The moment the conscience bows under the sin, and confesses it, then it gets into an upright position; an uprightness of soul, where evil has been, is shewn in the consciousness of evil, and power to confess it; and therefore the church of God, or an individual soul, must get into this state of uprightness before God, in order for Him to restore it; Job 33:23-26. Get sin judged in the conscience, and then there is the revelation of the unfailing love of God to meet the need. It is thus in the daily details of Christian life. Judgments may pass upon His people, but His chastening love is seen in it all.

And thus is learned the reason why the Lord reproaches the church for leaving her first love. There is in it the revelation of His perfect and unchanged love shining through the condemnation of their state. And do we not see this dawn in the natural relationships of life? Take husband and wife. A wife may take care of the house and fulfil all her duties so as to leave nothing undone for which her husband could find fault; but if her love for him has diminished, will all her service satisfy him if his love to her be the same as at the first? No. Well, then, if it will not do for him, it will not do for Christ: He must have the reflection of His love. He says, I am not blind to your good qualities, but I want yourself. Love, which was once the spring of every action, is gone; and therefore the service is valueless. If love is wanting, the rest is as nothing. It is true that our love cannot answer worthily, but still it may answer truly; for at least Christ looks for undividedness of object, though there be not adequateness of affection. There must be a dividedness of heart if there is instability of affection. This was the secret of all the failure at Ephesus. Undividedness of heart as regarded the object of affection had been lost, singleness of eye was gone, and the perfect reflection of that love which had laid hold of the church for Himself was gone. Still, while Christ says, “I have somewhat against thee,” He marks everything that is good. “Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” Well, then, it might be said, What can the Lord want more? He says, I want herself. Remember this as regards the church. Then He says, “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.” To me this is a very solemn but touching word to us, for we have gone much farther from our first love than they; still the heart

of him that is faithful finds a certain refuge in Christ, for his soul finds in the very reproach an infallible proof of His unchanged love.

What does He take notice of as excellent here? “Works, and labour, and patience.” Nothing positive is named that marks the decline, but the works that were done were not linked with the first love. And here let us observe, that the church has a positive service very distinct from what the Jews ever had. God was not looking for the Jews to go out in love, but the church, having received grace, is to go forth in grace to call poor sinners in. The Jew had the law as a wall to keep righteousness in, but no open door for love to flow out.

Take the Thessalonians, who, in this, are in direct contrast to these Ephesian saints, and who were in the freshness of their “first love,” and what is noticed in them? “Their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” —just the very same things that are commended in Ephesus. What was the difference, then? Not that they had no works, but that the true spring of them was gone; while in the Thessalonians the spring of it all was in full play. The three great principles of Christianity, faith, hope, and love were all at Thessalonica (that is, the full link of the heart with the source of power). The faith which characterised their “work” kept them walking in communion with God. The love which characterised their “labour” linked them with the source of power. And in the “hope” which characterised their patience we get the coming of the Lord, as the object before their souls, for their patient waiting in service. Thus, in the Thessalonians you get spiritual power, Christ Himself as the object, and love characterising it all. Suppose I go

labouring, and the spirit of love is in my work, what a difference there will be when the whole service is stamped with the character of this love! If it is only in preaching the gospel, how fully shall I set forth God's love to a lost world, if the love of Christ is freshly springing up in my own soul! But alas! how often have we to reproach ourselves with going on in a round of Christian duty, faithful in general intention, but not flowing from the fresh realisation of the love of Christ to our souls.

But righteousness and true holiness, and the aspect of the church in connection with these characters of God, have their place as well as the love which is His nature. "Thou canst not bear them that are evil." The natural, the normal state of the church, is the full power of good in the midst of evil, giving a bright testimony through divine power. The church ought not to be the place where good and evil are in conflict within, but in such a state as to be the manifestation of good in the midst of evil. But suppose a decline, then there is a question of evil within. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" is the only right state of the church. This is its primary and only absolutely owned state. Next comes power to remove the evil and make it an occasion of blessing when it does arise. (See Acts.) But if it ceases to be thus, then a question of evil within it arises, as here: "Thou canst not bear them that are evil." Now evil had come in, or this would not have been said. There was no longer this overflowing stream of goodness, but, the stream having got low, it was a painful process to navigate it in safety and blessing. The banks were broken down, and evil had come in, or there could not have been this question as to evil. Take the case of

Ananias and Sapphira. They wanted to get the character of devotedness, for such the church had, but without the cost of it. Thus hypocrisy had come into the church, but the power of good was there to expose the evil which sought the character of good for credit's sake. Love of money really governed them, modified by the love of church reputation. And the Holy Ghost's presence must be manifested in judgment. This was a sad beginning, when the good has to be characterised by the conflict with evil, instead of the good being manifested by keeping evil out. Then as to doctrine, it is the same thing: "This thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." Patience had to be exercised. We see at once that it is not the first state (joy over that which is good) but a work of patience which was needed; and we have specially to look at this characteristic in our walk as Christians. That which characterises power individually is patience when the time of conflict with evil begins.

But then we get another principle. There are cases in which Christ approves hatred. "Thou hatest" that "which I also hate." The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes brought in a licence to evil with the character of grace, thus putting into association Christ and evil. And this is a terrible thing—the bringing in that which associates God with evil; for Satan would imitate or counterfeit grace, and thus associate God with evil, the very thing that God says—"my soul hateth." We have seen that the character in which Christ is presented is connected with judgment. He is walking amidst the candlesticks. And here, being the general and introductory church, the judgment also is the general resulting judgment. The warning therefore is, that the church will be removed. In sum, we

get the three points, responsibility, failure, and consequent judgment. Then, with respect to the promise, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” the paradise which He has made for Himself. It is not the paradise in which God visited man to see what he was doing, as He came to Adam, and if doing well, He was to allow him to remain, but if evil, to turn him out; but it is God taking man into His own paradise. What a difference between the paradise of man, into which God came and found sin there, and so cast man out, and the paradise of God, into which man is taken as the result of redemption, to go no more out. There are no two trees here; there is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil here—we have had plenty of it in our own responsibility. We shall possess it there according to the holiness of God; indeed, in nature we do so already, being renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him that created us in righteousness and true holiness. But there is but one tree, and this the tree of life, the one unfailing perfect source of life in God; and one partaking of it—the result, not of responsibility, but of redemption and life-giving power, and a redemption according to God’s own counsels and thoughts—responsibility not being dispensed with, but fulfilled according to Christ’s own love. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.” Grace had sustained the individual that overcame; and when the church had failed, instead of sailing on with the stream of failure (the heart of the individual saint having spiritual energy to form an estimate of the failure within, and judge it in the sight of God, instead of being discouraged and sinking when others were letting go their first love) they themselves overcame. But then it is well to see that grace did it all.

“My grace is sufficient for thee.” And the result was, that they had their place in God’s paradise, feeding on all the ripe fruit the tree of life could produce.

In applying all this as a general principle we find the secret testimony of grace to the hearts of the faithful to be the source of strength. If “to me to live is Christ,” it is the testimony of unfailing grace that carries me through all trials and difficulties; nay, the greater the trial and failure, the more it brings out what God is to my soul, so that I know God in a way that I never knew Him before (like Abraham, who, “when he was tried, offered up Isaac”; and then he learned God as a “God of resurrection,” which he had never thus known before). What a comfort it is to find Christ so much the more enjoyed the more we are in the midst of hindrances, and, seeing the failure, look to Him who never fails! “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.”

In Ephesus, then, we find, that we begin with the church’s failure. Such is the witness of the Judge, and the effect of failure will be the removal of her candlestick, unless she repent; and, as to this, she is called back to the first works, or else she will cease to be a witness on the earth.

The failure was not in public acting, not in righteousness, refuting false teachers, but in intimacy of communion with Christ in her love. Her works had not diminished in quantity or zeal; their character was deteriorated: Christ knew when there was not the same love to Him in them.

Lecture 3

We saw in our last lecture that the character of judgment runs through the whole of the book of Revelation—first of all among the churches, and then in the world. So that we have the Lord walking in the midst of the candlesticks, exercising judgment, taking notice of all that is going on, and saying, “I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” And we also saw the importance of remembering the distinction between the church as seen in Christ in heaven, and seen on the earth, as representing Christ. We are partakers of His life, and united to Him in heaven; but it is equally true that He has set the church as a vessel to bear His name before the world, “the epistle of Christ known and read of all men.” We also remarked, that the responsibility of the church down here does not touch the question of salvation in any wise; and also that God’s faithfulness to individuals does not touch the judgment of the corporate body bearing His name. God had promised in His faithfulness to carry them on to the fulness of His glory; but, at the same time, He must judge them for failure in the responsibility in which He has placed them down here. We must not confound His judgment of the vessel set in testimony on the earth, and His faithfulness to the church— the bride, united by the Holy Ghost to Christ in heaven. But, moreover, God judges His saints individually for their good by exercising their hearts and consciences in warnings; and bowing under His judgments, they are blessed, while “the simple pass on and are punished” (Prov. 22:3), and at length, as a body, are spued out of His mouth, while all the trials, discipline, and chastenings turn to the profit of the church as to its heavenly calling. In the address to each

church there is a peculiar revelation of Christ made, with which the peculiar judgment corresponds; and also special promises, suited to their special need, meeting the exercise of the heart in order to sustain it, and pledges given to the faithful.

We have seen that the very first thing that characterised the church, looked at in its responsibility as pictured by Ephesus, was, that it had departed from the power of its original standing, “left its first love.” Nor is the subject now the supply of grace from the Head; it is no longer “that which every joint supplieth,” but the giving of reproofs, warnings, and promises, to act on the hearts and consciences of individual saints in their responsibility down here.

Another thing which it is well to remember here is, that we shall never find the object of the address to be the power of the Holy Ghost actively at work to form and gather. If it is judgment which is spoken of, it clearly cannot be, for Christ can never b said to judge the work of the Holy Ghost. It is power working in grace, if the Holy Ghost works. Christ, in exercising His judgment, is shewing forth His estimate of the practical use which has been made of the work of the Spirit after it has been given. The first great truth is, that the Lord looks at the church as responsible for all the love of which it is the object, and expects a return; and if He finds it not, but finds departure from the first love, which is only the sad commencement of greater failure, then He says, “Repent, or I will remove thy candlestick out of its place.”

Then, again, mark another thing. It is not individuals who are judged here, but churches (although individuals

may hear and profit by the warnings). Thus the Spirit speaks to the churches; but there being no response from the church, no repenting, no doing the first works, no returning to the first love, the candlestick is to be removed. And then the address comes individually to him “that hath an ear—let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

But although as a church it has failed, and the candlestick must be removed, still there is such a thing as individual energy to overcome. And mark here that it is overcoming in the condition in which the church found itself. The responsibility of individuals is that of overcoming where they were. This was very different from the state of things when the fulness of blessing was poured in by the Holy Ghost. There was now that within the church which was to be overcome, not in the world merely. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” He will revive the heart of the faithful one by promises to sustain it against the snare of Satan in the world; but when decay has come in, then the conscience necessarily becomes exercised as to maintenance of their standing where they were. Snares, difficulties, and dangers had come in; for we must remember, that the church had fallen from its first love, when Smyrna was addressed; and the moment the church is addressed by the Spirit, as a fallen church, it ceases to be in itself the place of security for the saint; he cannot take for granted, that, in walking with it, he walks according to the power and will of God. A fallen church cannot secure me from error; being itself under judgment, it cannot be a guarantee for anything. In truth it never was, but apostolic power and energy, which

sustained and watched over it, while the apostles lived. (See Acts 20:28, 29, and 2 Peter 1:15.)

Then individuals are singled out, for the church can no longer warrant me in this or that. The church may be right in this or that, but I have to make good my security against, or at any rate independent of, the church by the word of God; for I must discern what I can follow, and what I cannot, by the word of God applied by the Spirit. But then this state of things by no means supposes that there was no blessing, that there was nothing excellent left in the church; for we find the Lord recognising and commending many things. But surely I need scarcely say, how amazingly important is this principle, that a failing church ceases to be a guarantee; and, therefore, I have to judge in individual responsibility what I am to receive and what I am to reject. The church has been, as set up of God, a place of blessing as regards individuals, a guardian for Christ of the state they were in, as being the vessel and expression of the power of the Holy Ghost, the proper result of His working; but it is not so at all now that it has left its first estate; and, as we have remarked, the apostles alone ever maintained it in it practically, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the church of Corinth, etc. Our responsibility, however, never changes; nor can Christ fail in needed grace for the state in which the church is.

I would here take the opportunity of making a remark on the word “development,” which Satan has brought in as a very favourite word. Now there is perfect and entire infidelity involved in this thought of development in the church of the living God. There is nothing in God to be developed; He is the perfect unchangeable source of all. Now what God has called us to is a perfect revelation of

Himself in Christ, as we saw in 1 John 1:1, 2. There was the manifestation of that eternal life which was with the Father; and it is clear that there can be no development of that which has been manifested unless we can get something beyond the perfection of Christ, in whom all fulness dwells. God is light; Christ was the true light; and this shone out fully in the revelation of the glory of His Person, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And can we get anything better or fuller than this “Light”? Can we add to this revelation of “Truth”? There is much to be learned about Him; but it is a Person that is here presented, and not a doctrine. If it were a doctrine, merely, we might get something added—another doctrine; but it is not a question of doctrine merely, but a living Person that has been revealed. Well, then, if it is Christ Himself, what more can be.revealed? We cannot add to what God has wrought. Alas! man may decline from it, as was the case at Ephesus. They had left their first love; they had left something: there is no development in that. Of course we may ever learn, and should ever be learning, more about that which was revealed at the first; but God ever brings out each thing perfect in the beginning. For God cannot set up anything but what is perfect, anything that is inferior, or contrary to His mind.

Thus man in innocence was set up perfect in that innocence, and Adam fell. The priesthood of Aaron was perfect in its kind, but there was failure in Nadab and Abihu. Whatever God has planted, He has planted wholly a right seed according to His mind. Whatever comes from God must be perfect, and cannot be made more perfect by any other operation whatever. This is a very simple truth; but it is one which cuts up by the

roots and overturns a whole system of thoughts and feelings which would put something between our souls and Christ. It is not that God cannot reveal in the creature more than He has yet revealed, and accomplish what is better than what went before. He does so: the Second Adam is clearly infinitely more excellent than the first. But the thing that He sets up is absloutely perfect, as the expression of His mind in that thing. Man cannot improve or add to it. The thing set up for us is the perfect manifestation of God in Christ; hence the notion of development is rejection of the true object, or blasphemy. So John says, “that which was from the beginning,” when he would keep the saints secure. But even as to glory, as in man’s responsibility, that passes away. God had “planted thee a noble vine; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? “From this cause—that, directly a thing is put into a man’s hand, there is departure.

Then we get another principle. This departure having come in, God uses Satan’s power, acting through the world’s hostility, for two ends: first, to exercise the divine life in a saint; secondly, to hinder a further departure from the Lord. This is the “tribulation “they were to have; and, therefore, when we come to Smyrna, we hear of persecutions. If you take the history of the life of Christ, it was an exercise of trial and suffering until He reached the cross; it was not that He needed it to deliver Him from any existing evil; it only brought out His perfectness more fully, that He might be made perfect in the just result, in glory as man, of what He was morally. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered.” The manifestation of all that was in Him was brought out

through opposition and slighting. His path became darker and darker down to the cross. He had to overcome Satan, and says for others, “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.”

The second end to which God uses Satan’s power, in persecutions and trials to the saints, is to hinder a further departure from Himself. There is a constant tendency in the heart of the saints to take rest in prosperous circumstances, because the flesh naturally turns to that which is agreeable in the world for rest, the result of which is a decay of vitality within; but this will not do. Therefore God says, “Arise and depart, for this is not your rest, it is polluted.” Persecution is the natural portion of the church of God, while down here, in a world of sin. And when the church began to take rest at the beginning, God was obliged very soon to bring in persecution amongst them.

In Matthew’s gospel, the Lord beautifully unfolds the spirit and character of the kingdom in the sermon on the mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”; “Blessed are the meek”; “Blessed are the pure in heart,” etc., etc. Blessing is the character in which He introduces the witness He was bearing. God was shewing what was blessed in His sight. Then the grace of Christ was just beginning to be manifested, shewing the natural consequences of the principles and moral character of His kingdom. The miracles which He had already performed had attracted the attention of crowds from all the surrounding country, and He thereupon explains to those who heard the true spirit and character of the kingdom, which they, indeed, thought of quite otherwise,

and tells who are the blessed; but at the end of the gospel in chapter 23, it is “Woe! woe! woe!” instead of blessing. “Your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” It was because the opposition of man had been fully brought out by the perfect manifestation of what Christ was. The beginning of Matthew’s gospel was the blessed outflow of what was in His heart, while the course of His life brings out what was in their hearts, and hence the word, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” etc. To return—God sends us tribulation, opposition from without, to bring out grace and to hinder the constant tendency to decay; with Christ it was always and only to bring out grace. Thus God uses Satan as an instrument to work out blessing even for the church. Take Job, for instance. How wondrously was Satan used of God for blessing in Job’s case! It is God who begins the conversation with Satan, and He knew perfectly well all He was doing in attracting Satan’s attention to Job, and says, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” Satan’s malice was quite ready to plague and persecute him; but this malice of Satan was used by God to bring Job to that which was necessary for his blessing—the knowledge of the evil that was in his heart, which he could not have so learned any other way. Then, again, take Paul. He was taken up into the third heaven, there to get such a sense of the power of God as would fit him for his peculiar service to the church and the world, and such a revelation of the glory of Jesus as was proper to sustain him under all the trials he must inevitably pass through. And what is the use the flesh would make of this? Why it would puff up, and say, “Now, Paul, you have been into the third heaven, and

nobody has been there but you." So there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him; and for this he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him; but no, it cannot be removed, lest Paul should be exalted above measure. But he gets this assurance— "my grace is sufficient for thee." That which became strength to Paul, as far as himself was concerned, was that by which he learned his own weakness—the "thorn in the flesh, the messenger to buffet him"; for it then became a question of Christ's grace and strength, and not Paul's. And now Paul can say, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

It seems astonishing that God should use Satan as an instrument to try the saints with, and not interfere to deliver: but so He does, as we see here; for He says, not "I will cast you into prison," but "the devil will cast some of you into prison"; but could not the Lord have hindered it? Of course He could; but as the trial was needed, had He hindered the devil from so acting, He would have hindered them from the blessings which would result from such a trial. Take, again, the case of Peter. The Lord said, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee." What? that Peter should not be sifted? No, not a bit; for Peter needed sifting, because he had confidence in the flesh. But the Lord prayed that his "faith might not fail"; that is, that Peter might be sustained under his trial— his heart not lose its hold on Christ, but be assured of His love, and get the intended blessing. And to such trials of faith Peter alludes, when he says, "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be

found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And when Satan had sifted the chaff from the wheat, then the Lord would use him as He said: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

When the church had fallen—had left its first love, she has to be put in the furnace, to keep the world, its allurements, and its evil, from acting on her own evil tendencies, while remaining in a body of sin and death. While she was walking in the freshness of her "first love," the world had no power over her. Christ was too vividly the object before her for her to sink into other affections which leave the heart open to the reasoning of unbelief. But when the "first love" was departed from, then the church became the prey of her own evil flesh, acted on by the evils around, therefore she must be put into the furnace, the place where Satan persecuted, to prevent her getting into the far more dangerous place where Satan dwells, that is, the world.

Verse 9. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich." Christians were poor and despicable in appearance, when the church was first set up. Leaving their first love, they were in danger of falling in with the current of the world's reasonings; and the Lord lets loose the prince of it against them, makes them find their sorrow where they were in danger of finding a false ease and joy, but the true character of enmity of the world, instead of its false allurements, which draw them into it, and away from the Father's love; and they sink into the insignificance and poverty which the world's opposition sets the saints in. "But thou art rich," says the Lord. These poor despised few possessed divine and exhaustless riches. They had got multiplied in the

world and enlarged, and then there was a tendency to rest in the effects produced and not on the Lord; and the Lord, loving them too much to suffer this, must put them into the furnace to make them lean on Himself. For He will cast the church on its own proper portion altogether, and therefore He uses the hostility of the world to drive it back into its own proper hopes and privileges. But for this it would seem strange that the Lord should leave them to be tried “ten days,” were it not to teach them that heaven is their portion and not the earth; that they are not to remain on the earth, but to pass through it as pilgrims and strangers, to glorify Him who, when down here, was a stranger, and who now in glory is a stranger to the world, as the world. But then this shews also that the trial is measured. God may use Satan as a rod, but he cannot touch a hair of our head beyond what is allowed.

But the church must be brought to the deep consciousness of the state from whence she has so deeply fallen. Hence, Christ not only suffered the devil to cast some of them into prison, but says also, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” They may be martyred, and what then? Jesus gives them a crown of life. The church had slipped into the world; still, where living faith was in exercise, the effect was to give Christ His true place, and to strengthen all. When once it came to the question of giving up Christ, there were martyrs, perhaps even amongst the worldliest. This is often seen. Just so it is now, in the day in which we live. Christians are largely seeking just what the world seek, wealth, power, and influence: these three things are just what the Lord had not. And can I be said to be a stranger where I have power and influence? Certainly

not; and if the Lord turns the current against them, then they must pass through the furnace. The church must give up a heavenly Christ and a crucified Christ, if it take the world up in any sense as its portion. The church of God cannot associate the world and religion without losing its true character.

The object of Judaism was to associate religion with this world, with the earth: and thus God proved whether man could be attracted to God Himself through earthly things being associated with Him. To this end God gave them a magnificent temple, gorgeous dresses, splendid ceremonies, music and singing, that He might mingle the tastes and feelings of nature with Himself. But all this, mark, needed a priesthood between them and God; for it was not the presence of God, as light, in heaven, and peaceful communion with Himself. These earthly things do but keep the soul at a distance from God. For, wherever the world is connected with religion, priesthood must come in, because, the moment you get man as he is, he cannot stand before God; he cannot stand in the light and therefore needs a priest.

But we now are brought nigh; we can stand in the light as God is in the light: we are priests; and as to our standing in God's presence, there is no need of a priesthood between God and us. Christ suffered without the gate; and the moment the blood of Christ, wherewith we are sanctified, is taken into the holy place into the presence of God, our association is with heavenly places, and no longer with an earthly city (for there is no holy city now); and we are taken outside the world altogether (and the world, as religionised in a fleshly way, for that, for us, is the camp. "Let us go out therefore unto him without the camp") and inside the veil with Him. It was

exactly what the apostle was teaching the Hebrews. They could not go on with religion with a worldly character, with Judaism, which was God's earthly religion. Hence, too, it is the apostle says, if he had known Christ after the flesh, he knew him no more. He was only a heavenly Christ to him.

Carnal ordinances connected man with God under Judaism; but, Christ being rejected, His followers have His place of acceptance in heaven, and rejection on the earth. The cross or heaven. Now there is no middle thing—Christ is wholly heavenly; and we are raised up to sit in heavenly places in Him. The moment the church loses the sense of its heavenly place in Christ, the Lord in His faithful love lets loose the power of Satan upon us, just that we may learn that the very world that we are seeking to religionise is the place of Satan's throne. Of course in such case we shall be sure to have the world and its thoughts about religion entirely opposed to us; but then we shall have Christ and His thoughts with us, who says, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer," for "I am the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." The character of Christ in the address to this church is as "dead and alive." Christ is not merely divine—God—but He is also the One who was dead and is alive again for evermore. Looked at as man He has been rejected and cast out; so that, like Mary Magdalene, we must get either an empty tomb (for that is all the world is, if we seek Christ) or a risen Jesus. If your heart is fixed on Christ, all you will find in this world is the tomb of Jesus, and nothing in it. Then we have nothing to do with this world, for if we are in spirit with our Head in heaven, we have all our blessings there. But then it is a constant difficulty, in a world like

this, to get and to keep the heart and soul up to this; but it must be done. For otherwise, if we do not cleave to the world, the world of itself will cleave to us; and if decay comes in, and the first love is left, then “tribulation” must come, that we “be not conformed to the world.” This was the case with the church here. They had left their first love, therefore they had to be put through this course of trial, to keep them in remembrance that they were not of the world. Judaism crept in—development, etc., etc.— “intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind,” instead of being a despised few, a little flock. Their numbers increased amazingly, so that they made a fair show in the flesh. In fact, you find the whole thing rapidly conformed to the likeness of the Jewish hierarchy. Then persecution comes in and blows upon it all; and if there was persecution even unto death, where there was a living faith in a living Lord, though such a one may die here, he shall not be hurt of the second death. The history of these times proves that the living power and truth in the church was not in its doctors, but in its martyrs.

Pergamos. “I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat [throne] is.” Here we get another and more subtle character of evil. The Lord gives credit for all He can. The church had gone through persecution, and had been faithful. “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith,” when Antipas, my faithful martyr, was slain. But now it was not merely worldly persecution without (that assailed but purified the church), but doctrinal corruption within. The church of God has its place of responsibility in the world where Satan’s throne is. If this ceases to be a persecuting

world, because the church has ceased to be a heavenly witnessing church, still the church is living there; that is the place where, as to its external forms, it still is, and has been ever since the epoch here referred to. It is not a question here of individual conduct, but of the corporate position of the church.

People have a notion that Satan ceased to be the prince of this world when Christ was crucified. Now, I would just say, that it was at the cross of Christ that Satan emphatically became the prince of this world. He was it always, really, as to man's heart. But till Christ was rejected, it might have been hoped that some means might find, or cause to spring up, some good in man; but the cross proved and determined the subjection of man's heart to Satan, so as that nought could deliver it as such. Of course the cross was virtually the destruction of his power, for there Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Then, in a sense, as to the accomplishment of the work which was to effect this, as to righteousness before God, his power ceased, his head was bruised, though the fruit of this accomplished work is not yet brought in by power. Man had been tried in every way, and, lastly, in the Jewish system, had been put under responsibility by law, and tested on the ground of obedience. There he had failed, but he is ready to think that, if he could do all he liked, he would set all right. He was put to the test in this, by the committal of power into his hand, in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. In both ways he failed, that is, in the Jews, and in the representative of the imperial power. Christ came. Satan risked everything in getting rid of Christ, but it only ended in his own defeat; still he is for a time left to lead the world out of which Christ has

been cast, which, in its universal and varied forms, is the instrument of Satan (as we see at the Lord's crucifixion). Satan, the prince of this world, came and found nothing in Christ; but the chief priests, Pharisees, Pontius Pilate, Jews, and Gentile power were all led of him. And even His own disciples forsook Him, through their dread of Satan's power manifested in the world. In a word, the whole world was led by Satan to reject Christ, and from that moment Satan is the manifested prince of this world: for until Christ was rejected by the world, Satan could not be displayed as the world's prince. And the Lord owned him such, calling him "the prince of this world, saying, Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me."

The church of God has been taken entirely out of the world to be associated with God's Prince in heaven; therefore Christians have no business to be dwelling, as their place of abode, their home, where Satan's throne is, living in the world and as the world. But, alas! the church has practically slipped off from "holding the Head," and has taken an earthly character. If "to me to live is Christ," it is not Christ to be standing in worldly religion; for man in the flesh must have something between him and the Head. The difference between the Christian and the religion of the world is of the most absolute character. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living [that is, alive] in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" A man in the world must have ordinances. How can he get on religiously without them? But ordinances are not Christ; they have been nailed to His cross. There is no possibility of escaping the religion of the world,

ordinances, and the like, but by knowing and walking in the power of a dead and risen Christ. Man in the flesh must have a religion of ordinances between him and God; but if united to the Head in heaven, nothing can be wanting to bring him nearer, for he is one with Christ; and if he is not one with the Head, then he is separated from Christ. Put anything whatever between Christ and the soul, and all is gone. The position then becomes a totally different one.

This corrupt tendency to association with the world brought in persecution, but with it the suited promise, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is quite true that the Lord causes trial, but never do you find that there is with Him any moral acquiescence in evil. He cannot tempt by evil doctrine. The Lord had taught them the evil of this corrupting association with the world, by turning it into a persecuting world; but He could not send Balaam’s evil teaching; for it would be impossible to talk of Christ’s sending moral temptation as a rod for the correction of the saints. He may permit it in His holy wisdom. The effort of the enemy in Pergamos would not like the tribulation spoken of in Smyrna. Balaam would associate them religiously with the world—a sadder evil than Satan’s openly persecuting power.

In Ephesus, we had the first point of departure, leaving their “first love.” In Smyrna they were put into the furnace. Persecution had not attained Satan’s ends—faithfulness even unto death had crowned the sufferers with a martyr’s honour: but here a new danger arises. They were dwelling where Satan’s throne is. The world is the place of Satan’s throne; and now corruption, pleasing to the flesh, associating the church with the

world, is taught. The enemy is working within. “Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.”

Thus there is an amazing and most instructive difference between the persecution of Smyrna and the seduction of Pergamos. In Smyrna the Lord says, “The devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” “I have died for you, and now do you be faithful unto death for me.” In Smyrna the Lord would not step in to hinder the consequences of the position they were in, but turned them to the maintaining the declining church in its own true character, giving the assurance of the everlasting and heavenly promise, a crown to the faithful. But in Pergamos, the fact of their dwelling in the place where Satan’s throne was shews itself in another way. And the Lord could not, without judging the world itself, remove the snare by acting on the world itself. You have got satanic subtlety acting in concert with the world, and by its spirit in the church—a false prophet leading it into association with the place of Satan’s throne where it dwelt—the world that had ceased to be a persecutor. You have got Balaam there; not Jezebel yet.

A most terrible and frightful character is that of Balaam. The question had been already raised on the ground of Israel’s failure, whether God would bring them into the land—whether Satan, through his instruments, Balak and Balaam, could hinder Israel’s entrance into Canaan. The effort was to get Jehovah to curse Israel, but they could not. For, as between Him and the accuser, “God saw no perverseness in Israel,” neither was there any possibility of using Satan’s power against the people of God, as Balaam said, “There is no enchantment against

Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." God held Balaam's lips and forced him to speak blessings instead of cursings, in spite of himself. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." When the devil comes as an adversary, he has no power; the secret of his power lies in coming in as a tempter and seducer. When Satan could not prevail in getting Jehovah to curse Israel, he seduced them into wickedness, leading them "to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication"; and then how could the holy God bring them in? (See Numbers 25.)

In Pergamos, Satan comes within the church as a seducing Satan; while in Smyrna, Satan keeps outside the church as the persecuting Satan. Therefore in Smyrna they are exhorted, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Weakness is in "fear "; the danger is in fear. When the saint is out of the persecution, he often trembles as he looks at it and becomes frightened; but when once he is thoroughly in it, if he has faith, he looks out of it up to God and finds he never was so happy. Thus he is separated from the world and made to feel what his own proper portion is. But as the church of God is dwelling on Satan's territory, if he has not this persecuting character, then he gives her as much of the world as he can (for, as Satan says, "all that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it"); and if it can be said of the world, that "thou hast made the church rich," then the world will have the heart of the church, instead of her risen Head, "for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." Balaam was a prophet, though a false one, and could use the name of Jehovah, and declare he must speak by His word only; and we find his spirit here coming within the

church to make it at ease in the world. The wicked servant (who said in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming, and began to eat and drink with the drunken “) was treated as a servant still, though a wicked one. If Satan can only make a Christian comfortable in the world, his end is gained. Then they might go and eat in the idol temple, etc.

In Nicolaitanism we have the flesh acting in the church of God; and in Balaam it is the spirit of the world, brought in by the false prophet, coming in, and in a seducing way, to bring the church into league with the world, to make the church quiet and comfortable in the world that killed Christ.

We get a teacher here, a kind of religious instructor; as it says, “them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel.” “So also hast thou them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.” In the former case, in Ephesus, it was “the deeds of the Nicolaitanes”; but here it is a doctrine allowing of evil deeds—antinomianism and worse—that which was not against the law only, but against Christ, internal corruption connected with, and helped on by, association with the world without. It is very sad (and our hearts ought to bear the burden of what passes within the church) to see how the church still declined, after tribulation had brightened it up for God after its commencing failure at Ephesus (for the root of evil was there), and returning ease made it content to dwell where Satan’s throne was, and then, of course, the door was opened for evil doctrine, false teaching, connecting fleshliness with spirituality, which is antinomianism. Satan did not desire to persecute where he could

corrupt; for Satan's persecutions only brighten the soul up for God, while the seducing corruptions of Satan imperceptibly separate the soul from God. There was not yet the full ripeness of wickedness as in Jezebel's time, but only the teaching the doctrine which allowed these evil deeds; but in the next church we see there are children born of this evil, the evil being their moral birth-place.

We see the Lord's eye and heart had followed them to where they dwelt, even to Satan's throne, as He said, "I know where thou dwellest"; and from thence (that is, from the spirit of association with it) He would call them with this word of warning, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Here the word is spoken of judicially as a sword out of Christ's mouth. In such a state of things the word of God is the source to which the saint is drawn. The promises now become much more individual: "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna." It was hidden faithfulness which was to be sustained by the promise of this hidden manna (seen indeed in one sense, because the fruits would be manifested to all around). The church as a body was dwelling in the world; then, as a necessary consequence, comes the secret life of the heart of the faithful soul with God in the power of the word. It is the inward link with that which never changes in its character, sustaining secret fidelity to God. And what a difference is this from the judicial use of the word—the being fought against by the sword of Christ's mouth (the living members being associated with the Christ who suffered on earth, but is now in heaven)!

The manna signifies the Son of God become incarnate to give life to our souls, His entering in humiliation into all our circumstances, and is the provision for the daily walk through the wilderness: for we find the manna spoken of in connection with Jesus as the living bread sent down from heaven. “This is the true bread which cometh down from heaven,” John 6. But what then is the hidden manna? The manna for Israel was spread around the camp; and they were to gather it daily for their food. And so likewise is Christ to be the daily provision of the soul while in this wilderness world; but this is not the hidden manna. There was to be a golden pot of manna laid up before God, and when the Israelites had got into the land, they were to have the memorial of what they had enjoyed in the wilderness. This hidden manna is the remembrance of a suffering Christ down here—the memory of what Christ has been in the wilderness, as a man, an humbled, suffering man, and who is God’s eternal delight in heaven; and in our eternal state, he that has overcome, he that has been faithful in separation with Christ from the world, will have the everlasting enjoyment of fellowship with God in His delight in a once humbled Christ—the same kind of delight, although in a different measure. If we are walking faithfully with a rejected Christ, instead of letting Balaam into our hearts, we shall enjoy Christ thus down here in spirit; but we cannot enjoy Christ in our souls, if we are mixed up with ungodliness in the world: if we pretend to it, then it becomes Nicolaitanism. But in proportion as we get and apprehend the secret of what Christ was in the world, in our souls, shall we feed upon Him; but this cannot be, if we are walking in the spirit of the world. Even the presentation of Christ in the gospels we cannot enjoy,

unless it is as food for the soul. A man may say that truth is very beautiful; but if it only feeds the imagination, it does him no good. God did not give His Son to suffer down here, and then to be played with, but to feed upon.

The “white stone “gives the general idea of a vote in favour of any one; it is the secret mark of approbation from one to another. There are public joys in heaven common to all, thousands and thousands of voices in communion and praise, echoing the song of praise. And there are joys we share in Christ together here; but He must have our individual affections as well as our common affections. My own peculiar joy in Christ you can never know, neither can I ever taste yours; and this is true of the highest affections. “A new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” That name would have no meaning for anybody else but him to whom it is given. Christ reveals Himself to the soul in such sort that a stranger intesmeddleth not with its joy. Individual joy, personal communion, is distinct from, though it enhances, the universal joy; and that individual joy which we know down here will never be interrupted. This promise, as do all those to the churches, relates to the future time of heavenly blessing; but it is also the source of joy and strength now. The Spirit of God makes us anticipate the day. We may have now in spirit this “white stone” from Christ, this secret expression of His grace and love, which others cannot have for me, neither can I have it for them. How this makes this “white stone” worth everything else! What a secret source of strength it is, even though all the world think me wrong, if I have the white stone of Christ’s approbation, acquired in following the word, but known

in the heart! But, I say again, I must judge all by the word, that sword of His mouth that disarms and purges all the workings of Balaam. Then I do not mind—let the world talk about things as it pleases, Christ has talked to me, and in the coming day of glory will own all He has said to me.

It is sorrowful enough what a Balaam is teaching in the church; but then, mark, there cannot be any trouble among the saints that does not bring out the faithfulness of Him who waits to bless the "overcomer," and thus bring the soul into communion with Christ in a way that nothing else could. For nothing gives the blessed consciousness of Christ's approbation as between the soul and Himself, like faithfulness where evil begins to corrupt. If it is false teaching within, the word (as in persecution, and with all else) is "Overcome." He that has an ear to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches is to be overcoming that evil whatever it be that besets the church.

Thyatira. The hour forbids my doing more than just looking for a moment at Thyatira. You get this difference when Jezebel comes in; it is a prophetess still, but she herself becomes the mother of children; a whole class of persons are born of this corruption. Of persons who were dallying with this corruption and evil (as well as souls simply led astray) He says, "These will I punish except they repent." But those whose moral existence is derived from this corruption, I will kill them—as He says, "I will kill her children with death." But the moment you get this condition of the church, as the begetter of corruption, then comes in the judgment of the nations: "as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers"; and the heart of the believer is led to

the coming of the Lord, “I will give him the morning star.”

I am glad to close with this promise, it is full of blessing. Meanwhile the Lord Himself becomes to us the hidden manna. May He give to us and all- His saints to avoid everything like Balaam’s spirit and teaching. We are one with Jesus, members of His body; we are of His flesh, and of His bones, and nothing but this union with Christ will abide; as the knowledge of our union with Christ, and the realisation of it in our souls, is the only safeguard against the seducing spirit of the day in which we live. The Lord give us to be faithful to this blessed truth of being one with Him who is at God’s right hand. Then people may try to get between me and God by their ordinances or their priesthood; but I can say, “No; I am brought too near to God for you to come between us; and also too near to God for you to bring me nearer. There is where grace has set me; and all else is but pitiable nonsense.”

We “are called upon to judge evil in the church, for God cannot accept Balaam and Jezebel, if we can. Therefore, may the Lord give us to remember that failure within the church is to be judged. We are called specially to take heed to this in the day in which we live, that the church, being itself under judgment, cannot be a guarantee for faith or anything else whatever.

Lecture 4

I alluded in a few words the last evening to the church of Thyatira on account of the connection of Balaam and Jezebel: Balaam being a prophet acting among the saints to seduce them; and Jezebel, a prophetess, established within, being a farther advance in evil—not merely a

seducer, as Balaam, but a mother of children there, as Jezebel, having children of this corruption.

And now we get (in this part of the chapter) into what we may call new ground. Two things mark this. The Spirit of God, who rises far above all our failure, directs the eye of the faithful remnant to the coming of the Lord Jesus. And the expression, “he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches,” is no longer in connection with the address to the church in general, but after the promises to them that “overcome.” And this marks out the remnant as separate from the body in general. The position of the remnant is specially marked out as being no longer in connection with the general body of the church, but with the place in which those stand to whom the promise is sent, as “to him that overcometh.” In the address to this church, and to the three following churches, the exhortation to hear is placed after the special promise.

The distinguishing element which we found brought into the last church (Pergamos) is, that the world is the place of Satan’s throne. Therefore the church must be in either of these two positions—a persecuted suffering church in the world because of faithfulness, or lose that character and be brought to acquiesce and go on in the world.

We saw in Ephesus decline marking its state— “thou hast left thy first love.” In Smyrna, persecution comes in, “the devil shall cast some of you into prison,” thus brightening them up for God. And afterwards, in Pergamos, corrupting instructions go on within; and all these, not with respect to individual failure, but to the corporate state of the church, it being that which was

characterising the church at certain periods of time in this dispensation. In the address to Pergamos, we find the seductive teaching going on to corrupt what was within, but not as yet established and settled within, so that what characterised the within should be productive of evil. The motherhood of evil was now in the church.

Balaam the false prophet was seducing, and joining the church to the world. “Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam”; and to the “overcomer,” the individual promise and blessing of the hidden manna and the white stone are given. But now there is something farther— “thou sufferest that woman Jezebel.” Here the evil was allowed. We saw that, when Balaam failed in getting God to curse Israel, he then tried to bring them into trouble through association in evil with the people of the adversary. This has now succeeded in the professing church.

In Thyatira, therefore, we have a still more terrible state of things than in Pergamos. There was not only the evil teaching —those who “hold the doctrine of Balaam,” but a person established within, having children of this seduction; not merely seducing God’s children into it, but Jezebel was, so to speak, so much at home there, that children were born, finding their home and birthplace in the evil, yea, springing from the very corruption itself. But then mark that, in this increased evil and wickedness, we find also increased energy on the part of the faithful ones; for God had a remnant in the midst of the evil, whose faithfulness shone out the brighter by reason of the dense darkness around. We see this exemplified in Israel’s history. In the midst of idolatry, worshipping the golden calf, or under a persecuting Jezebel, men of power, like Elijah and

Elisha, were raised up in a special power of testimony for God, thus manifesting that God was and is ever sufficient for His people's need.

When evil is at such a height as to make it impossible for the faithful ones to go along with it, then they get into a more advanced state of knowledge and power in separation from it (although it may be one of much more trial) than they had when the church was in a more prosperous condition. In the times of Elijah God preserved His name in a most special way. The whole nation of Israel had got so dreadfully bad, that God would be obliged to cut them off; but the time had not yet come. But in the time of Elijah they had nothing rightly in order; there was neither temple, nor sacrifice, nor priesthood at Mount Carmel; nevertheless God was there for the faithful few, in a way that the people at Jerusalem had not the knowledge and enjoyment of; for the mighty power of God was there to give testimony to the word of His prophet. And so again with Moses, he went on faithfully with the Lord while Israel was failing all around him. It was not when Israel was going on well that Moses was the nearest to God, but when they had all gone wrong. When the golden calf was made, then "Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp"; and then he went to meet with God, and there "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." And we find God referring to this in Numbers 12 as gloriously distinguishing Moses. When Aaron and Miriam spake against Moses, and not on Moses's going up to God on Mount Sinai, God says, "Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses, who is faithful in all mine house? With him will I speak mouth to mouth."

When Moses met God in the tabernacle outside the camp, he was more excellent, so to speak, than when God called him to the top of Mount Sinai. Indeed, we find it a constant principle in Scripture that, where there is most manifest and universal failure, there God brings out in His faithful ones far greater testimony and power than had been known in the body as a whole, thus shewing, as Jethro says, “In the thing wherein they dealt proudly [by their sin and rebellion against God] God was above them” in grace and power. It was so in the time of the Lord Jesus, who was a most blessed and glorious example of this principle; being the Lord Himself, who brought out the fullest and most blessed testimony of grace and righteousness to bear upon the ways of the world, and of His own people, at the moment of Israel’s and the world’s darkest and deepest sin of crucifying God’s Son. For at the very time that Israel’s heart was made fat—when they were in a condition to receive seven other spirits more wicked than him that had of old possessed them, ready to merge into that last state which was worse than the first, then God, who had before spoken to them in divers manners by sacrifice and type and prophets, spoke to them by His Son, in the Person of the meek and lowly Jesus.

This is the case when Jezebel is come in here at Thyatira. “I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first.” The effect of the condition of the professing church was to drive saints into a kind of energy they had not before known. So indeed has it ever been in the history of the church in what has been called “the dark ages.” We find the most faithful testimony, such a measure of devotedness (which I am sure I should be glad to see now in any way) unknown at other

times, men hazarding their lives to witness for God; but how little of this in our day of ease and slothfulness!

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and works, and the last to be more than the first.” Here we get the love and the faith working, which were wanting in Ephesus; and now the Lord says, I will encourage them with “hope,” so that we get faith, hope, and charity, the three great principles of Christianity. Although not produced in their own happy order, as in Thessalonians, still they are all here in a way. And mark how quick-sighted God always is, to take notice of the good things, and that before He speaks of the evil things.

We get this character of judgment in Christ here. “These things saith the Son of God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass.” Fire is a symbol of unfailing judgment; this penetrated everywhere, as the eye of God. But what does He first see? He sees at once, no doubt, through this terrible evil; but He notices first what delights His heart in these poor saints that nobody cared anything about. He sees that which is delightsome to Himself in the despised few; and while His feet, like unto fine brass, mark the unchangeable character of that righteousness which God (in His spiritual dealings with and claims upon man) manifests down here, and which sustains His pure and infallible judgment. Hence the altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle was of brass, and which in man was divinely accomplished in Christ, and characterised His Person; yet the eye of God rests upon the very least spark of faithfulness in the midst of evil. There is not one throb of the heart that beats true to Himself, in the midst of abounding iniquity, that passes unheeded by him; and

this is what sustains the heart in the midst of untoward circumstances. And happy it is for us to know (in the simplicity of faith) and realise in power in our souls, the full meaning of those two little words, “I know,” thus walking in the happy consciousness that the eye of God is upon our walk and ways.

Verse 20. “I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,” etc. Now the church, taken as a whole, is characterised by suffering the evil; it is not now as before, “thou canst not bear them that are evil”; there was now the full public allowance of this spirit of evil which was in the church. This was going much farther down the scale than merely having the evil teaching among them: thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants.” They suffered a woman, having a professed character in the church, “who calleth herself a prophetess” —a false one surely, yet one who professed to hold and teach the word of God in the church. “I gave her space to repent, and she repented not.” Thus we see God does not all at once deal in judgment with her, but gives her time for repentance; He has patience with her, but she does not repent. He was not dealing with the heathen here: to them He preaches the gospel, that their souls may be won to Christ. But here was one who called herself a prophetess in the church, teaching God’s servants to “commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols,” and God deals with her on this ground of her profession. He “gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not”: therefore He must execute judgment.

And mark, that there is no mention made here of a candlestick. He gave her space to repent; but it is not said here, “I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” —for Jezebel is not indeed acknowledged as a candlestick. There are two characters of judgment, for they were not all the children of Jezebel. To commit adultery is a common figure in Scripture for tampering with evil, particularly idolatrous evil, because it was God’s people giving themselves to others than Him. First, “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” Secondly, “And I will kill her children with death.” There are those that are not her children, but people who have to say to her, who are content to associate and have fellowship with the evil. Them I will punish, they shall eat the fruit of their ways: “and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.” I will see who are content to float down the stream with the evil, or who make a stand in faithfulness to me. Them that have committed adultery with her, that have tampered with this spirit of false prophecy, “I will cast into great tribulation, except they repent”; but those who are her children, who have got their Christian place and name in virtue of this false doctrine, they shall have full judgment, “I will kill her children with death.” It is not merely tribulation for them, for they are objects of full and complete judgment: time having been given them for repentance, those that are born of her shall be visited with immediate judgment, “I will kill them with death.”

How sad it is, how very sad, to see Christians, as we often do, tampering with such evil. Take, for instance,

the Galatians: there were saints there who were tampering with Judaism, who wanted to bring in the law; it is not that they were not Christians, but they were mixed up with that which was utterly hateful to God. Paul, therefore, says to them, “I stand in doubt of you,” though afterwards his faith links them with their risen Head, and in virtue of Christ’s unfailing grace, and their completeness in Him, he says, “I have confidence in you through the Lord.” It requires great watchfulness, for the soul is ever in danger of being mixed up with principles which God utterly hates. In Colossians they were not holding the head; they were putting something between the head and the members. The apostle Paul is in an agony when he sees anything coming in to separate the saint from his immediate, proper, and personal connection with Christ. If it be a true Christian that is thus tampering with evil, he must be put into tribulation to be brightened up for God; and if he be not converted, then there is nothing before him but judgment. So all who in the public Christian world of the day tamper with the corruption of Christianity, represented by Jezebel in Thyatira, will be cast into desperate distress, if they repent not of their deeds. It is a very solemn thought, but a true one, that God having taught the saints that they are one with Christ, he who puts anything whatever between them and the Head, virtually denies Christianity. It was the great truth given to the apostle Paul to unfold; it was what he received specially from the Lord: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Therefore it was that it puts Paul’s mind into an agony, whatever it might be, whether works of the law, priesthood, or anything else, which, coming in between the soul and Christ, denied the great truth he had learned, the very truth that he was converted to,

that the church was one with Christ, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

This blessed truth, held in the simplicity of faith, gives power to the soul, and sweeps everything else away; and it also sweeps through the whole course of the Christian's daily life, if he has anything between his soul and Christ. If I were a Jew I should want something on the earth, and some one between me and the God whom I obscurely know; but I am a Christian, and therefore all I want is in heaven. But again, if I am a Christian, I am united to Christ, I am one with Him; if therefore united to Him, one with Him, nothing whatever can come between us, so that in attempting to bring in anything between us, it is actually setting aside Christianity altogether. Many Christians would be dreadfully frightened did they know how many things they are putting between themselves and Christ, thus virtually denying their oneness with Christ in heaven. If you would bring a priest on earth between me and God, any other than Christ in heaven, you at once destroy my privilege, for if Christ be a priest and I am one with Him, I must be a priest also; but is this priesthood carried on on the earth? No; the place of His priesthood is in heaven. An earthly priesthood doubly denies Christianity. It makes the system and standing earthly, and it denies our association with Christ. If I were a Jew I should go to an earthly temple, and rightly so; but being a Christian, when I go to God, it must be in heaven. Being one with Christ, I can have no place of worship on the earth, though my body may be there. Christ Himself being cast out of it, I am in heaven, and if I am to use any priest on the earth, I must leave heaven to come down here to use it there. The priesthood is

exercised in the place to which it belongs. An earthly priesthood was suitable where God was between the cherubim behind the veil on earth. A heavenly one has its place of exercise in heaven. Yes, dear friends, if our souls are washed in Christ's blood, everything we can possibly want is in heaven. "Our life is hid with Christ in God"; and then, necessarily, such "a High Priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." The good Lord only give His own blessed truth more power in our souls, and then all the questionings of earthly priesthood, ordinances, and the like, would soon vanish. I must have a true priest in heaven or not have a true Christ for my soul.

Now mark the character God takes: "I am he that searcheth the hearts and the reins." You shall not escape me; and however plausible the evil may be, and however you may put the name of the Lord upon it (as Israel put Jehovah's to the golden calf when they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel … tomorrow is a feast to Jehovah," Exod. 32:4, 5), still it will meet with full judgment, because you have put my saints lower than I have put them in Christ, and have idolatrously corrupted the truth of God.

Verse 24. From this verse and onward the Lord is taking up the faithful remnant, and therefore we find Him taking another way of dealing. "But unto you I say [and to], the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine [in committing fornication, and eating things sacrificed unto idols], and which have not known the depths of Satan, I will put upon you none other burden." This abstaining from the evil, though very blessed, still is not the soul growing up from strength to strength into

its full portion in Christ; “but that which ye have hold fast.” I am going to “kill her children with death, but that which ye have hold fast till I come.” This is what He now directs their faith, the eye of their souls, to—His coming. He does not expect them to get back to the point from whence the church departed, but directs them onward to His coming. I am going to execute judgment. “I will kill her children with death.” Therefore you must not expect Jezebel to get right, or to be in the condition of a candlestick. No, your eye must rest upon another thing; and here comes in the hope. Still it is not presented in the form of the bright and blessed hope they got at the first, like the Thessalonians, where they “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” It now has a different character, being presented as a refuge to the faithful, because “in the place where righteousness should have been, behold iniquity was there.” This is the comfort held out in the midst of the wreck of everything, “till I come.” The Lord does own the “works, and charity, and service, and faith, and patience,” that do exist. You have only got this little now, “but that which ye have hold fast till I come.” It is one thing to have the coming of the Lord presented as a relief to a faithful few, in the midst of the evil and corruptions of the Jezebel state of the church, and another and very different thing to have it as the bright and blessed hope of the church to sustain it and to lift it out of the corruptions of the world. But it is not merely the fact of His coming: the brightness of Himself who comes can alone satisfy the heart’s desire.

Verse 26-28. Now He opens out the consequences of His coming to the nations and to the church. “To him will I

give power over the nations." This is a remarkable expression, and we do not find any such when the church was in full prosperity. But now, when the professing church has got into the position of being the greatest possible trial to the saints, and its association with the world has made that which bears its name the mother of children of corruption, the faithful ones in the midst of it all have special promises on which to stay their souls. We know from history, how in the darkest times men of faith have had to wend their way through evil in the church, and fearing detection by those who called themselves by that name, and under bitter persecution from the ruling power in the earth. The nominal church being really Satan's power by corruption exercised through the nations. And so it is here; the saints, having faith and patience, go on persevering through every difficulty, if it be Jezebel and her children with the name of the church on the one side, and persecution of the nations on the other. The promise is association with Jesus Himself, the bright and morning star; and where there has been faith in this, there shall be power over the nations. The world that, under Satan's power, has been the trial of saints, shall be subjected to them. "He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end [in the midst of that corruption which has still the name and responsibility of a church], to him will I give power over the nations." (In Matthew 24 we get the same thing as to principle, though not as applying to the same point of time: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.") "And I will give him the morning star." Thus He is giving to the faithful remnant, while in this condition, the special consciousness of union with Himself. The difficulty of the position in which they found themselves was, that all

around them were turning to Jezebel and her corruption, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. And then they cry, “What am I to do? “to which the Lord replies, “Follow me—keep my works unto the end,” and then you shall have my portion at the end, “even as I received of my Father.”

We see here, in the promise made to the faithful, two characters of the coming of the Lord pointed out. The first regards their position as to the world—it is as “power over the nations”; then, secondly, their own proper blessing, the morning star. With regard to the first, there is a reference to it in Psalm 2:9. The church of the living God in its walk on this earth ought to have judged the world; but now, having committed fornication with the world, it has no power to judge it: therefore the Lord says, “I must”; for the church, having failed in the holiness and separateness of its walk to condemn the world, the Lord must give testimony to what the world is in judgment. (See Psalm 2.) If the persecuted ones bowed to the authority of the world, as ordained of God, still morally they were separated from it. And from the corruption of Jezebel they stood wholly aloof with horror, let Jezebel’s influence be what it might. They were honoured by being martyred. The powers of the world at the close will be associated against God’s anointed, but in spite of all He will take His power over the nations. And what is the church’s place and portion there? Christ is now sitting on the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost is come down to gather the church; and after the saints are taken to the Lord, then He will come forth and judge the world.

“Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion” — “I will declare the decree” — “Thou art my Son, this day

have I begotten thee." Son is not used here in the character of eternal Son of the Father, but, as born in the world, the man set up in glory to rule over the earth. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Christ is not doing this now; He is not now praying for the world. The moment He asks God in respect of it, judgment on the world must ensue. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." In John 17 Christ says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." He leaves it out of His requests. He is not now breaking the nations in pieces, but is sending forth His blessed gospel to gather souls out of the world; and the Holy Ghost is sent down to join them to Himself, thus forming the church. But when He asks for the nations, it will be to dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be the judgment of the living. And hence the word of warning at the close of Psalm 2, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings," etc. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry"; for if you do not bow to this summons, thus giving you in patience, opportunity to repent, you must bow to the wrath of the Lamb. "To me every knee shall bow."

And mark here what the church's portion is as one with Christ: "To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations," etc., as I have received of my Father. And of Christ it is said, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron." The world must be set right and He will execute judgment upon it, and when He comes to do it, the church will be associated with Him in it; but now she is dwelling where Satan's seat is, with evil on every side, and cannot touch it by way of setting it right. And, therefore, it is, as if Christ should say to His faithful remnant, "Do not you be afraid, do not you be uneasy on

account of persecutions, nor yet about the corruptions of Jezebel: only ‘keep my works unto the end.’” This is the time of patience and lowly faithfulness. Do you walk through the world as I walked through Israel, “and I will give you power over the nations,” “even as I have received of My Father.” The power shall be yours when I take Mine and reign. This is the special character of association with Christ in power.

But meanwhile what are we to do as regards setting the world right? Nothing, and this the flesh cannot understand. We are not to meddle with the raging of the heathen, nor yet to concern ourselves with the alliances of nations (while still remembering that we have to submit to the powers that be, as ordained of God, and obey them), nor yet to defile ourselves by touching the evils of Jezebel, but to wait on God. “Keep my works unto the end” and wait patiently; for when Christ shall have the upper hand, so shall we. Our interests are His and His are ours; they are so enwrapped together that they cannot be sundered. The force of that expression in Colossians: “If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances?” —is just this: He is hid in God and so am I (that is the reasoning); His life is ours. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” He so refers our state to His, that, if He is hid in God, we are hidden too. And if His appearing is spoken of, “when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.” Thus, being entirely one with Christ while He is waiting on the Father’s throne, we are called to wait with Him in spirit down here.

I might notice by the way, that in Psalm no there may be some explanation of the expression, “of that day

knoweth no man, neither the Son." The Son is sitting at the right hand of God and is looked at prophetically as waiting there, as Jehovah said unto Him, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Therefore, in this sense the Son—as prophetic minister of revealed truth, and as such He spoke in Israel (see Heb. 1)—may be said not to know the day nor the hour; for, as Paul says, in Hebrews 10, He is "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool," when they will be made ours also. Wherefore in the address to Philadelphia, we are called upon to keep the word of His patience, and if He is waiting, it is no wonder that we have to wait also; and it is Himself that is the very best part of what we wait for.

This is the proper and peculiar portion of the church—association with Him; the other, that is the power over the nations, is merely the fruit and consequence of it. He must judge, but to you He is the "morning star." Judgment is His "strange work." He is slow to wrath, but He must execute judgment, because He cannot allow iniquity to go on for ever; for He is going to take possession of His own throne, and He cannot have a throne in connection with Satan and his evil, and therefore He must put the evil down, for He cannot allow it; so that antichristian power in the world must be cast down, as He cannot set up His own throne and let that exist. As it is said in Psalm 94:20, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" It could not be. Therefore He must do His strange work: but His proper work, so to speak, is to shine in His own heavenly brightness— our proper place to be associated with Him there.

“I will give him the morning star.” And who is it that sees the morning star? He who watches while it is night. All see the sun in its brightness; but those only who are not of the night, yet knowing that morally it is night and are looking for the morning star—those, and those only, see the morning star and get it as their portion. They are children, not of the night, but of the day; and, therefore, look they for the day. When the star rose that hailed Jesus, who was born King of the Jews, there were Annas and Simeens waiting for the consolation of Israel. And who were Anna’s friends in that day of darkness? Simply those who were looking for redemption in Israel, and to them she spake of Him. In them was made good that word in Malachi— “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another.” We see they knew each other, and they enjoyed the comfort in spirit by. the truth of Jesus of what follows in the prophet: “To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” These were a poor despised few who were but little known and less cared for; but they were “waiting” for redemption in Israel, sensible of the ruin and of the evil, because alive to God’s glory and to the privilege of being His people. In them, feeble as they were, we find a much brighter mark of faith than we do in Elijah when he was calling down fire from heaven. They were not setting the temple right, but were speaking together of God’s thoughts. Elijah was setting outward things to rights, but had not faith for inside things.114 In God’s unfailing grace to the remnant he had no just confidence. Law was the measure of his apprehension; but the Annas and Simeons had the secret of God in their souls (“the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant”), and were walking in the narrow and silent

path of faith, not setting the temple right, but speaking to all that were waiting for consolation in Israel. But were they content with the state of things? No; but in separation from evil, they waited for the consolation of Israel, which could alone set the evil right. And just so it is in our day. The Christian cannot change Jezebel, nor can he be mixed up with the mere temple-worshippers, the so-called religious systems of the day. He walks, while leaving them to the judgment of the Lord, far from violent attacks upon them, in quiet separation from all the evil, patiently waiting and watching during the long dark night of sorrow for the morning star of the day of glory. “To him that overcometh will I give the morning star”; and this morning star is Christ Himself. And He is in this way known to those, who, though in the night, yet are not of the night, being children of the day. The morning star is gone before the world sees the sun, before the sun rises, before the day appears. But before the sun rises, there is the morning star for those who are watching in the night. The world will see the sun; but the morning star is gone, as far as the world is concerned, before the sun rises. So we shall be gone to be with the morning star before the day of Christ appears to the world; and when Christ shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

There are three passages which refer to this morning star, to which it is important to refer you. In 2 Peter 1 he says, “We have also a more sure (that is, confirmed) word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.” Israel’s prophets had prophesied the full day of blessing on the earth, saying, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come.” “A

King shall reign in righteousness.” And their testimony was confirmed to the disciples by the vision on the holy mount. They prophesied, too, of events coming on the world which marked out its judgment in all its forms of rebellious will and power—of Nineveh and Babylon, and the beasts which should arise upon the earth—of Jerusalem and its portion as departed from God: and judgment was thus pointed out, so that there was a warning light, which in the midst of the darkness of this world itself gave a light which recalled him that gave heed to it to avoid the crime of human will which led on to divine judgment. And this they did well to take heed to, until the day-star arose in their hearts, because it was the light in a dark place. But the day-star itself was something yet more excellent.

The prophecies, indeed, are plain, their warning clear; they guard me from being mixed up with the spirit of the world, whose judgment is announced. In Revelation, I read of unclean spirits like frogs, going forth unto the kings of the earth, and of” the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. If I do not even exactly understand who and what the frogs mean, still the grand import of the prophecy is evident. They are not the power of good; they lead the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. It is thus a light shining in a dark place, the night of this world’s history on the absence of Christ. But the morning star is Christ Himself, as we see in Revelation 22. He is the bright and morning star. He will be the Sun of Righteousness to the world when He appears; but then there will be judgment. The wicked shall be as ashes under the soles of the feet—as stubble—and the day of the Lord as fire. But the star appears to them that

watch, before the sun appears to the world; for, as I can understand by the prophetical warning that this dark place is going to be judged, that “the night is far spent, and the day is at hand”; yet so night it is now, whatever people may think. And I want the morning star in my heart (the hope of Christ before the day, coming to receive the church to Himself—for the morning star is given to them that overcome) to cheer my soul through the long and dreary night, which is yet darker now than it was then, but still far spent, as the darkness of the night always thickens till again the dawn of another day rise beyond on the other side of heaven and the morning star appear to fix the eye of the watchful and waiting soul, and cheer the heart with a sure and certain hope. And what, then, do we want of the things of this dark place, which is now under judgment for having nailed God’s Son on the cross? Do not you, therefore, be seeking the riches, the honours, the power of this world, on which Christ is coming to execute judgment. One ray of the glory of Christ will at once wither up all the glory of this defiled world like an autumn leaf. Do not you, therefore, go on mixing yourself up with the world and heaping up riches. What will you do with them when Christ comes? Remember the Lord is at hand. But do I keep separate from this world merely because it is going to be judged? Certainly not. My whole portion for time and eternity is in Christ; the day-star has arisen in my heart. I am separated from the world by affection, and not by fear.

We have the coming of Christ as the morning star as a distinct thing from the sun-rise; for, when the sun rises upon the world, it will be for judgment. (See Isaiah 2 and Malachi 4:1-3.) But beside and before all this, we

have our portion in Christ; we are not of this world, we are redeemed out of it, and belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall join Him on high before He is manifested for the judgment of this world; and therefore the thunders of judgment cannot touch us, because we are seated with Him in heaven, from whence the judgments come. In Revelation 4 we have a most blessed and comforting picture of the position of the church. There are the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones, round about the throne, from whence the thunders, the lightnings, and the voices come: and they continue perfectly unmoved. But was this insensibility? Certainly not: for, when God Himself in His holy character is mentioned, immediately they fall down and cast their crowns before Him. Neither is this holiness the cause of any fear, when the living creatures proclaim the threefold holiness of Him who sits upon the throne; it is their worship breaks forth, and they fall down, and cast their crowns before Him in the full sense of the blessedness of Him who sits alone upon the throne. Christ, then, is this Morning Star, and if the day has dawned, and the day-star has arisen in our hearts, we know our association with Christ Himself, as within that place from which the judgment proceeds.

At the end of the Revelation we have the place of the Star again; chap. 22:16. The Lord brings us back from the prophetic testimony to Himself— “I Jesus have sent mine angel” — “I am the root and the offspring of David [this is in connection with His being the source of promise and heir of it, as King of Zion— ‘Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies’], and the bright and morning star.” But the moment He presents Himself as the bright and Morning Star, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”;

the Holy Ghost in the church says, “Come.” This response is what is connected with Himself. The mention of Himself attracts and awakens the answer of the Spirit. This is the character in which the church herself has to say to His coming. God, in the love of His own heart, has associated the church with Jesus, and the very mention of His name awakens the cry, “Come!” for it touches a chord which gives an immediate response; and therefore He does not say here, “Behold, I come quickly.” The question here is, not when He will come, but that it is Himself that is coming. He does not speak of His coming, blessed though that thought is, but He reveals Himself; and this it is that awakens the response of the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. We are for Himself, and shall be with Himself: it cannot be anything short of this, for He calls us “his body.” What a glorious place this is! Not merely wonderful, but glorious—identification with the Christ of God. No explanation of prophetic scripture (however nice and true it may be—however useful as a solemn warning as regards this world) can ever take the place, in the soul that is taught of God, of knowing its living union with a coming Jesus, and of the present waiting for Himself. No mere explanation of His coming as a doctrine is the proper hope of the saint. That hope is not prophecy; it is the real and blessed and sanctifying expectancy of a soul that knows Jesus, and waits to see and to be with Himself.

The bride alone hears the voice of the Bridegroom, which at once calls out the expression of her desire of His coming. To this He responds, assuring her of it; and then the Revelation closes, leaving this as her own expectation, whatever He may have previously

communicated to her concerning the judgment of this world, to which she does not belong. The Lord Jesus is represented as departing Himself, and coming and taking His bride to be with Him. Then, when the world is saying “Peace and safety,” sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.

Paul closes 1 Thessalonians 4 with these words, “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” And is that all? Yes, that is all; for to the heart which has learnt to love Him he can say no more. Then he adds,115 “Of the times and seasons ye have no need that I write unto you.” Ye are the children of the day, you wait for that. No explanation of this, as a doctrine, can ever reach the heart. You cannot make a person understand a relationship: to understand it he must himself be in it. An unquickened soul may understand in a manner what prophecy means; but nothing short of the sense and taste of being connected with Christ Himself can give the desire of His own personal coming. And why? Because for this the relationship must be known. In Revelation 22:16 the relationship is known, affection is awakened, and there is the immediate response.

Take a case: a woman is expecting her husband; he knocks at the door. Not a word is uttered out of his mouth; but his wife knows already who it is at the door, for it is he whom she loves that is there, and thus the natural feelings and affections proper for a wife are awakened, when the chord is touched by that which acts on them. But then the link must be in the heart; the affection must be there to produce the response; the chord which vibrates with this blessed truth must be there to be awakened by it. There is such a consciousness of union with Jesus, through the power of

God's Spirit, that the very moment He is spoken of in this character, the chord is touched, and the instinctive cry is, "Come." No amount of intelligence, merely, will produce this. And what a difference between expecting the Lord Jesus, because He has made me and His saints a part of Himself and His bride, and looking for His coming to judge poor sinners! Now mark the practical effect of this looking for Jesus: it takes us clean out of the world up to heaven. If my heart is right in its affections for Him, I am looking too straight up on high to take notice of the things around me. Plenty of things there are around in the world, plenty of bustle and turmoil; but it does not disturb the blessed calm of my soul; because nothing can alter our indissoluble relationship with a coming Jesus, as nothing, should divide us in hope.

To see the coming of the Lord Jesus for the church changes the character of a thousand scriptures. Take the Psalms for instance—those which speak about judgments on the ungodly, such as "the righteous washing their feet in the blood of the wicked." We are not the persons who say this. It is the language of Jews, and of godly Jews too, who will be delivered through the rod of power smiting their enemies, when all the tribes of the earth will wail because of Him. But do I want my enemies to be destroyed to get to Christ? Certainly not. I shall leave them to be with Him. It is a sorrowful thought indeed, though we recognise the just judgment of God, that such judgment will be accomplished upon those who despise Him and His grace. But as for me, I am going straight up to Christ in heaven. My place is in Him, while He is hid in God, in the nearest and most intimate union. I belong to the bride, a member of His

body, of His flesh, and of His bones. When we have hold of this blessed centre, Christ, and with Him, therefore, of God Himself, then every scripture falls into its proper place; and we get a spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost of things in heaven and our connection with them, and things on earth and our separateness from them; and, above all, our hearts get into their proper place, for, being set on Jesus Himself, we are waiting for Him. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory, but we shall be for ever with the Lord.

May the Lord give us such an apprehension of redemption and of our position in Him as may so fix our hearts on Himself that we may be daily walking down here like unto men that wait for their Lord, who has promised to come and take us to Himself, watching in the midst of a night of darkness, aware, that it is the night, although we are not of the night, but watching and waiting for the day, having the morning star arisen in our hearts! May the Lord keep us from idols; and above all from aught that savours of Jezebel, that we may be in dread, for fear of grieving Him in any of those things which have come in to spoil and corrupt that which He once planted so beautiful, to be for the manifestation of His glory in this dark and evil world.

Lecture 5

I feel, beloved brethren, that the very commencement of this chapter comforts one in a particular manner in connection with the exceeding solemnity of the address to the church of Sardis. I know of nothing more solemn than the point of view from which the Spirit of God, in this address to Sardis, regards the professing church, as to its name, its character, and its responsibility in the

world; for, while the address is to the church, the point of view from whence it is looked at is what the Son of God is in His own fulness of blessing; since it ought to be, in the power of divine grace, the expression of His nature and power, from whom its life flows; and it is necessarily addressed to the professing church, according to the professed position it has taken. I feel ever a little difficulty in speaking on the subject, because of the sense of responsibility that presses on me; and I pray the Lord may communicate to you the sense I have (nay, and a much greater sense than I have) of the responsibility connected with it. The church of Sardis was, indeed, in a most solemn condition. Still there is a comfort in the fulness and perfectness of Christ here given for the need of the church; and, when all else might seem to fail, so much the more does Christ bring out that unchangeable fulness which is always there in Him to be depended on.

The Lord's character (which, as I have before said, is usual in these addresses) is adapted to the state of those whom He is addressing— "these things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." It is not said here, as it is in the address to Ephesus, "He that holdeth in his right hand the seven stars"; but "he that hath the seven stars." And, mark, that no word in Scripture is omitted or changed without full meaning. The stars (the angels116) of the seven churches are symbolical representatives of the churches, but considered in those who have a character of authority under Him, who is the head of government. In the address to Ephesus, Christ holds all the authority in His hand (the stars, as I have just remarked, being the symbolical representatives of the whole system of

authority—of that active energy which characterises the churches to Christ's eye, which acts in His name in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks), judging the state of the church, and holding the representatives in His right hand.

But here in Sardis, failure, and even spiritual death, had come in, and characterised the state of the church— "I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead." We have seen how failure and decay had already previously got into the church; but Sardis was, in one point of view, in a worse state than even any before her, having a name to live while she was dead. It was decay of vital power—not the power of evil working, but a morally worn out thing; and consequently the Lord presented Himself to Sardis as having for faith all the fulness117 of the Holy Ghost at His disposal— "He that hath the seven Spirits of God"; and the seven stars, all power in the church, were at His disposal also (seven being the symbol of perfection.)

Whatever the failure of the church may be, however it may have coalesced with the world, this remains always true, that the full, divine competency of the Holy Ghost in His various attributes, is its portion, under Him who is the Head of the church and cares for it, and loves it, and watches over it; so that the church is without excuse, on one hand, and the believing saint has a resource on the other. But now that the whole thing had completely failed, that not only God's saints were seduced by the false doctrine of Balaam, and that Jezebel had found a home there, having children born there (as of Zion it shall be said, "This and that man were born in her," so here there were those who had their Christian name and birth-place in the very evil itself): another scene

presents itself here after the evil has fully developed itself—a deathful state, though all spiritual energy and authoritative power is there in Christ Himself, with whom they have to do. And much as the fact of all this being still and ever in Christ may condemn the professing church, the precious truth of all power in connection with the Holy Ghost being then, as ever, assuredly in Christ is brought out for the comfort and blessing of the faithful "overcomer." It is his stay in the midst of abounding evil.

Whatever may be the form in which corruption has come in, be it Jezebel or be it Balaam, the Lord says, "I know it all." If death is stamped on the professing church, still Christ says, "I have the seven Spirits of God, and nothing can touch this"; and, therefore, while all is going wrong, we find that He has still all that is needed for the full blessing of the church— "hath the seven Spirits of God." This is not altered a bit, either by the failure of man or by the wickedness of Satan.

In Revelation 4:5, and chap. 5:6, we have likewise mention of the seven Spirits of God—seven lamps of fire burning; seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, expressive of multiform power and manifold wisdom; so that it is as if the Lord had said, "Here is everything that can produce good, and secure good, and I have it all in My keeping." In Thyatira He had been obliged to teach them to look out for His coming as the only refuge in the midst of evil; and this hope is brought in as the bright and morning star, to light up the soul in the midst of surrounding darkness. Then, in the church of Sardis, where they had a name to live when they were dead, He further comforts the faithful ones with the assurance, that, as to the real

source of all strength, there is not any failure. If all outward supply is gone, He is still the same, and now He will make this known to the church as the power to sustain and support the faithful few; but He does not work a miracle for their deliverance. So likewise, we may observe, when Israel set up the golden calf, there was no miracle wrought to meet that failure, but there was spiritual power in Moses, when he put the tabernacle outside the camp.

The prophets in Judah prophesied, but they wrought no miracles, except when the sun-dial of Ahaz returned ten degrees backward as a special sign given to Hezekiah. They testified in order to bring man back to publicly acknowledged truth in a divinely established system, and comfort the hearts of the faithful. But when the whole nation of Israel had openly departed from God under Jeroboam, and at length Baal was set up and worshipped, then God worked miracles by the hands of His servants Elijah and Elisha. So that while in mercy and grace God was always sending testimony after testimony to Judah, but no miracle when open failure came in, His power must be shewn to prove that He was Jehovah, in contrast with Baal, which Judah did not deny. Power with corrupt holders of truth would corrupt them more; power as testimony to those gone away is the patient goodness of God. This is a great principle in the ways of God, and it is of this great principle that I am speaking, rather than of there being miracles.118 The great practical principle is established, that we may always reckon upon God, whatever the failure may be. It is true that we cannot but be sensible of failure, and a deep sense we ought to have of it, while, at the same time, we must never suffer the utter sense of man’s

failure to dim the eye of faith to the consciousness of Christ's power; it should rather turn more definitely and distinctly to that which can never fail. Thus we can look with calmness on the church's failure, because we look at it from our dwelling in that love which can never fail; but still we must care for it, and deeply feel it, as being dishonouring to the Lord.

Take for instance, the apostle Paul; how entirely he got above the position of the failing Corinthians and Galatians when he got up to the spring of confidence in the Lord. See how shockingly the Corinthians had been going on when Paul wrote to them. There was "such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles." Therefore he had to reprove them, but he looked above their actual state to the source of their life and hope; and, therefore, before he touches upon their evil, he can speak to them of their being "confirmed unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"; for "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." So also to the Galatians. When Paul wrote to them he said, "I stand in doubt of you"; for they had got under the law, and, therefore, Paul asks, must he change his voice—wants to know how he should speak to them; for they were off the Christian ground of grace, and, accordingly, he turns to speak to them according to the law. But when he gets up to Christ, then his heart gets to the spring of confidence—not confidence in them, but about them—and then he could say, "I have confidence in you through the Lord that you will be none otherwise minded." The right state of our souls is to have a just value for, and apprehension of, all that is in Christ, and consequently of all that the church ought to be for

Christ, in order to have a deeper sense of its failure, according to that which we see in Christ, of whom it ought to be the faithful and fruit-bearing witness; and then the sense of the failure will augment, and not diminish, our confidence in the Lord Jesus. And this it is that will keep the saint steady and quiet through it all, because our confidence is not in what the church ought to be for Christ, but in what Christ is for it.

Mark, then, the graciousness of the Lord, in the way in which He opens this address to Sardis. Before He touches on their terrible state, He first of all presents Himself as still possessing the plenary power of the Spirit, for the resource of faith; so that, notwithstanding all the failure and evil that had come in, the power and prevalency of the Spirit still remained the same, because it depended not upon the walk of the saint down here, but upon the value of Christ's work above. Just as God spake to Israel of old when they had failed, by the mouth of Haggai the prophet, saying, "According to the word which I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not." And so it is here— "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." Then He goes on to take up the state of the church— "I know thy works that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead." What a terrible condition is this! It completely portrays what we see all around us—I do not mean only at the present day, but what has actually been the state of the church for the last century and more.

In Sardis, it is not the church as having left her first love, as in Ephesus (although that has been the origin of all that has since followed). Nor is it as Smyrna, suffering under persecution from Satan, who has the

power of the world. Nor is it as Pergamos, dwelling in that same world where his throne is, having such as hold the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, a doctrine allowing evil deeds. Nor is it as Thyatira, suffering the prophetess Jezebel to teach and seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Nor has it yet arrived at the state of Laodicea, just ready to be spued out; nor is it like Israel, as the open and positive worshippers of Baal. Grace has still some work to do, and therefore we find it acting here and there. The church of Sardis, as we have seen, had got away from evil doctrine and the actual teaching of corruption; the evil of Sardis was more negative—a dead form without any living power. It has a great name to live, certainly. It is not Jezebel here, nor eating things offered to idols, neither is it yet spued out of Christ's mouth. They had got outward truth, but it was dead, having no living power; they had a certain outward and avowed profession and appearance of Christianity; but, alas! if there was the name to live, there was no power of life. They held the name and doctrine of Christianity; but alas! Christ was not there. Take orthodoxy as it now is and has been for some time past, and is it not just this? Saved from Jezebel, a dead form has come in. And here let us bear in mind what we have before remarked, that, in these addresses to the churches, nothing of that which is put under judgment has any reference to the energy of the Holy Ghost working. The thing that is judged is the use made of these graces and gifts of the Spirit of God.

Take the work of the Reformation as an illustration of this. As to the energy that produced it there was an undoubted work of God's Spirit; and we find with joy

what God was doing, and not what He is judging. It is from not seeing this distinction that people get into difficulty. Now, it may be asked, where is the fruit which should have been produced by the privileges brought in at the Reformation, and now so long enjoyed? God lights a candle, not to put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all who are in the house; then God looks to see if it gives forth the light which He has put into it. In the churches, we find a good or a bad state spoken of, but never is the good state named in connection with the Holy Ghost as producing it.

“I have not found thy works perfect before God.” It was set up complete in all the perfectness that there was in Christ for it; and therefore He looks for that which should answer to it, the perfectness in which it was originally set. Thus the Lord presents Himself as the One having all this perfectness in spiritual power and energy, and is looking for that which answers to it. We might say, “Is it not strange to say their works were not perfect, when we are told they are dead?” No, for the Lord never can descend below His own measure in dealing with evil, whether in the church or with an individual. If He gives a standard, it is that by which He must judge. The church must be judged according to the resources it has at its disposal. God never goes below this in looking for an answer to what He has done. Therefore we have to ask ourselves whether, as individuals, we are shewing to the world the holiness that we are made partakers of, and the love we are the objects of. There are very many who profess Christ, while there are few comparatively who live Christ. There is no charge here of Balaam and his corrupt doctrine,

eating things sacrificed to idols, or of Jezebel; but the Lord is looking for life. He looks for works complete, filled up according to the measure of grace with which He has connected the church. If we look at ourselves, dear friends, what can we say? The question is not whether we are producing any fruit at all, but whether the fruits that are produced are fruits meet for Him for whom the ground is dressed. If I till a field and sow it with wheat, and it does not bring forth according to my labours bestowed upon it, I must give it up, and I do not sow it with wheat any more. I am not here talking about the salvation of a soul, but of the Lord's judgment of the results in the saints, in souls already saved.

It is true that God will produce the fruits of every principle of His grace in perfection, when Christ takes His power; but before this He commits it to man. He gave the law to Israel, and they utterly failed respecting it. But Christ says, "Thy law have I hid in my heart." So also of Israel, God will, in the latter days, write the law in their hearts. Now Israel has become "a proverb and a bye-word among all nations," as having been unfaithful; but in the day of Christ's power, when God will produce fruit in perfection and fulness, then "Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the whole world with fruit."

Then take government that was put into man's hand. Nebuchadnezzar was entrusted with power, and we know what became of it. But government will be set up in perfection when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." So also the church of God was set up on the earth complete in Christ, to manifest the glory of her absent Head in heaven, and the power of the Holy Ghost conferred upon her. She was the habitation of God through the Spirit.

But alas! how miserably has she failed, and what God is looking for are the fruits of grace as a testimony and witness to His grace received. But when Christ “shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe,” then the church shall be manifested in glory, and the world shall learn that the church has been loved with the same love wherewith Christ was loved. But now it is a matter of responsibility, and this for each individual if the church fails. It will come to this, as to the professing church, that it will be spued out of His mouth. But, remember, this is not a question of salvation, but of profession before the world.

Take the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was given to produce certain effects. There the adequate fruits were produced. As to the present time, then.the enquiry of course is, Is the church of God producing for God fruits which answer to the power of testimony entrusted to it? No, the church as a body is not. Then comes out the individuality— “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear,” and this brings the question home to each one of us, “How far are we individually producing a testimony to God’s grace?” —a testimony, I mean, not in accordance with the first fulness of public power manifested in the church, but filling up the measure of what we have individually received, and the spiritual service of a saint, according to Christ’s power now; for so God in practice deals with the church, and the grace in Christ is always sufficient for that. When this is the question between the soul and God, surely we shall have to own that this individual measure of grace is not attained to. We may indeed zealously contend for a name; but the question before God is as to power and full fruits of grace in the measure of that which has been

received; and if the soul does not come up to that, it is a dreadful thing for it to be resting on a religious reputation, while the works are not perfect before God.

Oh! may the Lord keep us all from resting upon a religious reputation; for of all the terrible things that can befall a saint of God, one of the worst is, trusting to a religious reputation—especially for one who is engaged in ministering, I am sure. Alas! how often we have seen such a person labouring devotedly, diligently, blessed in his labours, gathering others really in truth to Christ, but thus gathering a circle round himself. Self is there, and thus he gets “a name to live,” becoming satisfied with the circle he has made, and resting in the fruits produced, and not in Him who is alone the power of life. Thus his usefulness is gone, and he himself stops short of the end. Look now at the direct contrast of this, in the Lord’s earthly path. He lost credit, every step He took, with those around Him, because He went on walking with His Father, shining brighter and brighter; till at last men could not bear its brightness, and, as far as they were concerned, put it out on the cross, because those around Him knew not His, measure of communion, and could not at all get up to it. Even His very disciples could not come up to the discipleship involved; they also dropped off, as He said, “Ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” Thus we see the blessed Lord in man’s estimation got lower and lower till they put Him to death, “even the death of the cross.”

Then there was Paul. What spiritual energy of faith there was in him! He walked with God in power; but we see that those about him could not attain to the point he had

reached; and, therefore, as Paul was advancing, he must necessarily leave them behind him. His path became more and more lonely, and at the end of his course he had to say, “all they which are in Asia be turned away from me.” Again, “all men forsook me, notwithstanding the Lord stood by me.” Paul, out of all he had gathered, had only one person to visit him in prison. Full energy was kept up in Paul, in the power of which he walked with God, while others slipped back; as he says, they were “the enemies of the cross of Christ,” “who mind earthly things.” And even those who were not this were not keeping up to the point of faith; they lost sight of their heavenly citizenship; they sought their own more than the things of Jesus Christ.

Just in proportion as there is this secret measure of communion in our walk with God, in that which is hourly passing between the soul and God, will be the degree of our isolation. What we have most specially to look to is that all our works be perfect before God, that all our doings be measured with immediate reference to God; and this must necessarily produce a certain degree of isolation. It was thus with Christ: He was always lowly and He was already lonely, yet full of love to all, perfect in affability with every needy soul as with His disciples. It is no matter how we sink in the estimation of others, it will be the necessary consequence of faithfulness; and the reverse of all this is with a great show before the world—just this, “that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead,” “for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” The works are done in reference to man, and not to God. At the same time it is quite a right thing to walk with the saints and to keep and cultivate their affections, although the more faithful individual walk is,

the greater the isolation must be, because the fewer there will be who understand it. And yet the nearer to Christ, the greater, of course, will be the grace towards others, as He says, “as I have loved you, that ye also should love one another.” Thus in a close walking with God, there will be an abiding sense of His secret favour; but then this personal dependence upon God must lead to isolation. Our path will be a lonely one as Christ’s ever was. With all His grace and lowliness, to listen to all, and to serve all, yea even to the washing of our feet, yet He was left alone, though not left of God, as He said, “He that sent me is with me,” “the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things which please him.”

Now see the consequences of the works not being perfect before God; and this is what I feel to be so solemn in the warning here given: “Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.” Mark the two points here, “received and heard.” Firstly, the grace which it has received, and in which it has been set; and, secondly, the revealed word of God as their rule and guide. Grace has been received, and the word communicated. It is not that which we have not received, but that which we have received, that we are called to consider. The Lord presents the measure of responsibility in these two points, that which the church has received, and in which it has been set, and that which it has heard (the word of God being the alone measure of revealed guidance). God gives us His word to guide us, and grace to walk according to it.

“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.” Now it is a very wearying and tiring thing to watch; for one has to watch oneself too, or we are apt to fall asleep. The heart grows tired of being constantly awake to all that is going on. It is impossible to watch if we do not keep close to Christ—if we have not the sense of His watching us, and taking notice of us. We need great watchfulness in active service. Indeed, our every service ought to be connected with God as a matter of individual faith. We may be tried in it. The bush may be very thick, but the object on the other side should be clear. There is a constant tendency to slip away from that clearness of judgment about a thing, which we should have if close to Christ. When judging of a trial in the presence of Christ, the way out of it seems easy; but when we have got into the trial, we do not always see it so clearly. When we are first descending into a valley, the object on the other side, and the direction to be taken, are seen clearly enough; but when we have got into the thicket of the valley, it is not so easy to discern the pathway through the details of the way. We are apt, when we get into the weariness and distraction of the circumstances of the trial, to lose the clearness of apprehension which we had in judging of it in Christ’s presence. We all find there is much practical difficulty in seeing as clearly when in the thicket of the valley, as when on the heights with Christ. Our eye must be single to do God’s will; and the more humble we are, the more simple we shall be, and thus be guided through by the wisdom of His own will, who sees the end from the beginning, and guides us by His word and Spirit. The largest mind of man that was ever heard of could never discern God’s ways, while the “little child” who looks to God has God’s wisdom. Every step we take should be marked with the sense of God’s approbation. “For the

meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

"If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come on thee." If there is not this watchfulness in the professing church, how solemn is the result! "I will come on thee as a thief." What a fearful thing when the professing church, with its great name, is reduced, in God's estimation and judgment, to the level of the world, when it does not come up in its works to the expectation of God! He had not found their works perfect before God, because not according to the privileges given by God. God here says to them, If there be not the answer to what I have given, if there is not watchfulness, I must treat you as the world will be treated. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2, with regard to the world it is said, "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." But to the saints it is said, "but ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief; ye are all the children of light and the children of the day." And when He comes who brings in the day, the children of the day will come with Him. They will be, in fact, as the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"; "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe." And, again, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

In 1 Thessalonians 5 the Spirit of God contrasts the world with the church of God; while here in Sardis the Lord contrasts the professing church with the true saints of God, and announces to it the world's portion.

Therefore Sardis is addressed as the world; it is not denounced as Jezebel, but as receiving the judgment of what it is in spirit, the world; for if the professing church is not coming up to the measure of what it has “received and heard,” this is its portion. If it be not found watching, it is courting in its measure the same judgment as the world. Of course we are not saying that the church of God, which is one with Christ in glory, and whose life is hid with Christ in God, could ever be so treated; but it is an exceedingly solemn thought that the great professing body, with its “great name to live” and a “fair show in the flesh,” is waiting for the same judgment as the world. It is the world itself in fact. Then arises this question, How far have your souls realised that all that is going on around us bearing the name of God, while it is not of God—the nominal church, or Christendom as it is called, which is in truth the world, but having this name and position—will be treated as what it really is—the world? Well, then, dear friends, what a solemn fact is this, that we are, in this day in which we live, walking through a scene which must thus be visited, because God has said it, and alas! we know not how soon. I know of nothing more solemn than the identification of the professing church with the world in judgment which is here found.

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” Here we shall have another important point opened out; for here we shall find the characteristics of what is called the “invisible church.” “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis.” These “names” here signify “individuals” whom the Lord had counted up and known each one of them by name. “These are

they which have not defiled their garments"; they had not gone on with the world, now the professing church had defiled their garments. Sardis is not charged with the seductions of Balaam, or the corruptions of Jezebel, it may be; but she is "minding earthly things" and is "glorying in her shame." Sardis has not kept her garments unspotted by the world, and, therefore, her spot is not "the spot of His children." As Paul said, "even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things." It is the spirit of the world filling the heart as an accepted object, and hence conformity to it in order to walk with it, which is here spoken of. But those who have held by the cross of Christ with undefiled garments "shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

The character of the blessing always answers to the difficulty. They had kept their garments unspotted by the world when down here. Therefore they shall walk with Him in white up there, "and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Mark how individual this is— "his name," so constantly recurring.

The force of the expression, "the book of life," is evidently that of a general registry of profession, taken from the custom of corporations of cities, where a name may be enrolled, the title to which may prove false, giving at the first blush a prima facie title to something, though on investigation it will have to be erased. Those who were written in this book had a profession, "a name to live." This was very different from "being written in the book of life before the foundation of the world"; because God, in that case, had written them there: it was thus the book of the counsels and purposes of God.

“I will confess his name.” The Lord will distinguish each one that is His. And in these individuals we see that the invisible church exists amid the wreck of all, and when the visible body is judged, they will escape, and not merely escape, for they will be taken to the Lord before this. So that, when the Lord comes to judge the world, they will come with Him; and the visible church, not answering to the grace, will be treated as the world. There is, therefore, an invisible church, I doubt not; but mark that when the true church is invisible, then the visible church is treated like the world. These churches were called candlesticks, and God had put light in them, not to be put under a bushel, but to be put in a candlestick; to give light to all around. Well, then, is light invisible? If it is, what is invisible light worth? It only merits condemnation. What has been said by men for the last three hundred years is quite true, that there is an invisible church, but then this is the condemnation of that which is visible. Looked at with respect to its public collective testimony for God, does it bear out the precepts of Christ in its conduct and life? No; and, therefore, there has not been in the church the visible testimony to all the grace, and truth, and blessedness, which is the church’s portion in Christ.

We would here point out what very different aspects of the Lord’s coming we have presented to us in these addresses. In Thyatira, in the Jezebel state of the church, He turns away the eye from all hope of its restoration as a whole, and turns it to the Morning Star for the comfort of those who, though not of the night, yet feeling that it is the night, are watching for the Morning Star; thus presenting the hope of His coming as a refuge to the faithful overcomer in the midst of

abounding evil. Here in Sardis His coming has the character of judgment— “I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come on thee.” Sardis, being in a decayed dead state, necessarily brings a judgment on itself; for if the professing church be got into a state like the dead, then it must be treated like the dead. But in Philadelphia, it is quite a different thing; there He addresses a poor, feeble remnant in the midst of apostasy, with the blessed and encouraging hope of His coming quickly— “Behold, I come quickly.”

Philadelphia. We have seen the general course of the first of these churches to be declension; then the being drawn away by Satan; then warnings. Here a remnant are comforted. What characterises the faithful here is, that while they had no strength, they are yet in close connection with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. What characterises the father in Christ, in John’s first epistle, is the knowledge of Him that is from the beginning. So here in Philadelphia, we get a little strength, it is true; but there is no denial of His name. The address to the church, the foundation of the declaration made to it, is connected with Christ, is Himself; it is not a question of power. But when all is going wrong, as in John’s epistle, where there were the many Antichrists, still there were those who had that by which they could detect the false one; “for he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” Feeling it now to be a kind of hopeless thing to look for any restoration of the church, as far as regards apparent power, the keeping of the word of Christ’s patience is what characterises the church of Philadelphia; and the name of “him that is holy and him that is true “is stamped upon it in a peculiar way. In the way Christ is presented here there is no

question of power, as in Sardis, but the unfailing certainty of what He was in His character, and what He has said— “He that is holy, and he that is true.” With these two we can judge everything. When all was going wrong around, they were to keep to the simplicity that was in Christ; as in John’s epistle— “This is the true God and eternal life.” “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” They had got eternal life in their souls, and having touched Him and handled Him, and seen Him by faith, they could say who this true One was; and could also say, “this is the Holy One,” for He is not only the One who has power, but He is the Holy One.

Remark, too, that the characters of Christ presented here form no part of the original glory of Christ, spoken of in chapter 1, but refer to His moral character, discerned by the saint exercised in faith at the epoch to which the church refers. But the saints here had “kept the word of Christ’s patience”; and when the word of God is valued as such, then the character of Christ Himself governs the soul. His precepts become our authority, and Christ Himself personally rules the affections of the heart, and with a single eye the body is full of light. So it was with Mary, when the departure of the Lord drew nigh. The word of God links the soul with Christ as He was, and is; it just gives one a written Christ. See in Matthew 5: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”; and who so poor in spirit as Christ? “Blessed are the pure in heart”; and who so pure as He? “Blessed are the meek”; and who so meek as He? “Blessed are the peace-makers”: He was the great peacemaker, the very Prince of peace.

The first thing, of course, is to have Him as the living Christ for the salvation of the soul; and then, through

the written word, we get the spiritual perception of what this Christ is. It is the simple expression of Christ Himself, of Him who was the express image of God; who "was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And when we thus get the Spirit's testimony to Christ, the heart clings to Him as the "holy "and the "true." Thus the Christ found in the word governs the affections, for we dare not and would not be without, or depart from, this written Christ. This living link to a living Christ is the only safeguard against them that would seduce us. A holy Christ in whom we have the truth is the blessed, strong, moral assurance of the soul, when a mixed and lifeless Christianity is powerless against delusion; and when the same causes make the professing church incapable of discerning a plain path, when there is not faith enough to do without the world, and mixture is everywhere, then a holy and true Christ is the assuring guide and stay of the soul.

To Timothy Paul said, "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and surely there can be no better knowledge to be got than the knowledge of Christ. This was the point in the Epistle of John. The father in Christ "knew him that is from the beginning"; he could tell what the true Christ was; he knew "him that was holy, him that was true." It is not development that is needed, but merely the getting back to the simplicity that is in Christ—to know Him truly that was at first revealed, Him that was from the beginning. Therefore, if my soul is attached to the Christ of the written word, the Christ that I have loved

here is the same Christ that I am waiting for to come and take me up there.

The blessed picture that we get here of the Lord Jesus is not like that given in chapter 1, with “his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace” —firm, unchanging, a consuming fire in judgment, and now so revealed, and according to what was revealed by the Holy Ghost. But the picture here given of Him is in connection with the moral character given of Him in the written word— “he that is holy and he that is true.”

“He that hath the key of David; he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.” Christ is not looking for strength in His saints: He enters into His own personal and peculiar service and holds the “key” Himself; and this is our confidence. If raging billows rise in countries around us, and the preaching of the gospel seem to be forbidden, well, it is all in His hand. I might desire that the gospel might be preached in a certain land, and the hindrances may seem to be too many and too great; but my comfort is to know that Christ has the key, and all the divine power of God at His disposal; and it is as in John 10, “To him the porter openeth,” so that when Jesus presented Himself (as in the gospels) none could shut out His testimony. All the powers of earth—the Pharisees, the lawyers, the chief priests, the governors, the Pilates, and the Herods (those foxes)—could not hinder one poor sheep from hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd in the days of His flesh; and so it is now, for Christ is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” This is our confidence in preaching the gospel; for, with all the liberty with which we are blessed in this highly-favoured country, I could

not count upon a single year more, but for this simple promise, “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”; and I could go fearlessly into any country, whatever might be the outward circumstances, if I saw that the Lord had set before me an open door.

Of course we must wait the Lord’s time to have the door opened; as we see in the case of Paul, he was forbidden to speak in Asia, at one time, and then we find him there for three years afterwards, the Lord owning his labours there, so that all Asia (of which Ephesus, where he was gathering a church, was the capital) heard the word of God. Of course we shall have to be content to lean in faith on the arm of Him who holds the key, and in our patience we shall have to possess our souls; for there will always be circumstances to exercise our faith, and God will allow these circumstances to arise, to prove to us that we cannot do without Him. For then it is we find that we have no strength, and that God answers our weakness according to His own strength; because He cannot fail to answer the faith He has given. “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.” This word has often given me great confidence— “no man can shut it.” This is such a blessed comfort that if Christ has opened a door, no man, devil, or wicked spirit, can shut it; and although we have not strength even to push the door open, it is open for us. The whole church is weak, as weak as can be, and that in a bad sense, for what faith have we? We hear of a little faith. God shews us His power, as we have heard of in Madagascar. But where is the strength and energy of faith to be heard of amongst us?

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” This stamps

our safety and our power. It is Christ's own patience, for He is also waiting for the kingdom, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. We wait as and with Him; but here it is by the word. It is that which is our warrant and our security— the word by which He guides us into the same mind and spirit in which He waits, separated from the world and knit to Him in the same hopes, and joys, and delight, not finding rest till He finds His—the guidance of our mind, by the communicating His, into the thoughts and expectations which He has Himself. Only let us keep fast hold of the word of Christ's patience in these last perilous times. It is our power against the adversary— in the knowledge of Christ Himself, not in ecclesiastical power, but as holy and true, waiting apart from the world, as He is, and keeping His word, and belonging to Him, so that He takes us out of the hour of temptation that hangs over the world, and the open door of service is ours meanwhile in spite of all.

For, thus associated with Him, we have His own portion. Not being in spirit dwellers upon earth, but waiting with Him, He does not make us pass through that hour of temptation which is to sift out those who have their home here, confounding by the power of the enemy and the tribulation of God the men of this world, and making the world, clung to by any of His, too great a torment to cling to any longer. All this the Philadelphian saint escapes; he can look straight up to the heaven and heavenly Christ he belongs to; and the heart associated with Him knows that He will not fail his heart, but as soon as He rises up to take His place and power towards the world, will take him to be with Him, according to the hope He has given him. Only let us keep simply to the

written word of God, then we may defy all the power of our adversaries (not that we would be adversaries to them, God forbid!) Only let there be in the heart the consciousness of Christ's approbation, and that closeness of heart to God, which takes God's word for a guide because it is His, and then there will be the power of Christ, the strength of Christ made perfect in our weakness. That which characterises the true saints at this present time is the written word of God, as bringing Christ's character and name as truth and holiness into the heart; and thus walking, in fellowship and communion with "Him that is holy and him that is true," they will be safe.

"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." Here we get those who have an opposite character; and the Lord speaks very plainly, He does not spare them a bit. They are the synagogue of Satan. What did these Jews pretend to? All that which externally gave them a religious title to govern, to command, in the truth:— antiquity, and ordinances established of God, as they really had been in the case of the Jews, and the proof that they were the true and only people of God, the priesthood instituted of God. They had the pretension to be God's competent administrators of His blessings, which none else were; they had zeal for God, possession of His oracles. All else but themselves were without these distinctive privileges. Where else was eternal life to be found? When Christ's authority is owned in the heart, then this word comes in, "We write unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, that ye may believe on the name of

the Son of God." If God has given us eternal life in Christ, we do not want those who pretend to be the exclusive administrators of it; and we cannot let anything come in and separate between us and Him; we cannot go away from Christ, and we have got the true Christ in the word, and we cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard. Him who would lead me elsewhere I can easily detect as of the synagogue of Satan. They may prosper now: I will wait with Christ, keeping that word which teaches me from Him and with Him to wait till He comes and sets up the blessing and the glory.

But if God has given you eternal life, then do not you dispute with these of Satan's synagogue, as if they had any title from God (they have none); but judge ye whether ye are to obey them or God. We have "Him that is holy and him that is true"— "and the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." They were not to contend with this synagogue of Satan, and though they had but little strength and were of no reputation, yet in patience they were to possess their souls, because Christ will yet manifest His love to them before their adversaries. The synagogue of Satan was a religion of the flesh, which rested in outward things—in all that nature could claim as religious—works, ordinances, and the like, assuming and occupying the place of the Jews in Paul's time; and it is spiritually the same now. But "I will make them know that I have loved thee": the Greek marks with emphasis the "I" and "thee." Then the question resolves itself into this, Is Christ sufficient for me? Is Christ's approbation sufficient motive to govern my conduct? If Christ's approbation be not sufficient to satisfy a soul, that soul can never walk aright.

“Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast” (that is, “the word of my patience”). I am waiting, and you must wait; Christ is expecting till His foes be made His footstool. Instead of taking our ease, we must be waiting till He come in, just as He always waited till His Father came in, and as He does now till His Father makes His foes His footstool. I would mark here how emphatically the word “My” comes in throughout this address. It is the practical identification of the saint with “him that is holy and him that is true.” Waiting with Him in rejection from the hands of those who had all the ordinances, and antiquity for them, we shall be sharers with Him in glory. The word “My” is especially connected with everything in the glory. You have been weak in testimony down here, but you have kept the word of My patience, and you shall be a “pillar” of strength in the temple of My God, I will write on you the name of My God, the name of the city of My God … which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. This identification with Christ in patience, and Him in everything, is of the deepest interest and instruction.

The Lord give us to walk in the power of the Spirit with our hearts fixed on Christ as revealed as the holy and the true, keeping the word of His patience, that so His approbation may be our everlasting reward. May He keep us separate from the world upon which He is coming in judgment!

How great the contrast between expecting that which is hanging as a terror over a person’s head, and knowing Christ in such a way, having Him so completely the whole object of our desires and affections that when He

says, “Surely I come quickly,” the immediate response of our hearts may be, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Lecture 6

We only touched a little upon the general features of the church of Philadelphia last evening, just so much as was needful to connect it with the preceding church of Sardis. We will, therefore, now turn again, the Lord helping us, to consider more particularly the details of the church of Philadelphia; and in so doing, we would notice, in the first place, that the most prominent feature in this church of Philadelphia is, that it is one of special blessing to meet a special need. For, after all the display of terrible evil through which we have had to pass, in the previous condition of the churches, now that we have reached Philadelphia, we find it to be all mercy and blessing.

It is very blessed to observe, that however poor and feeble God’s people may be, even though the faithful ones be reduced to a remnant of individuals, He never forgets them. His eye is ever upon them to give them out of His own resources, according to what they need and when they need, at the time that surrounding things are darkest. When both the church and the world have arrived at a state of felt darkness, then the few who are faithful have the most “light in the Lord.” For the life of faith is always nourished and sustained by the faithful grace of Christ, according to the power of that which draws upon it—according to the difficulties through which it has to pass.

It is another question whether the Lord’s people are to be used in testimony by Him in time of failure; this will be according to His wisdom. We see this exemplified (as

we have before remarked) in Israel; the failure of the golden calf was met by inward spiritual power in Moses putting the tabernacle outside the camp. And when the open and avowed worship of Baal prevailed, then God raised up Elijah and Elisha with great outward manifestation of power; but then the seven thousand faithful ones were hidden of God. The Lord may not choose to put the outward honour of testimony upon that which has failed. Still He gives the needed grace and inward power of life to sustain the individual soul; and this, as regards the saints now, flowing from the Head in glory for the nourishment of the body on the earth, can never fail. Thus, as regards gifts in the church, for instance, those which were for signs ("sign-gifts" as they are sometimes called, and a testimony to the world, signs being for those which believe not, as "tongues," "gifts of healing," etc.), these may be all gone; but never can those gifts be removed which flow down from the Head to sustain the members of the body; for "no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church."

In the epistle to the Ephesians, where the church is so specially brought out as the body of Christ, we find the gifts for the church spoken of as being "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Here we have not a word about the sign-gifts, while in Corinthians we have "gifts of healing," "divers kind of tongues," "interpretation of tongues," etc. Thus we see in Scripture two characters of gifts distinctly marked out: first, the sign-gifts, as in Corinthians, which were public signs attached to the church for outward testimony,

whereby to attract an unbelieving world; secondly, those gifts which flow from the Head for the nourishment of the body. This nourishment must ever remain. It may come in the way of outward testimony, or direct from Christ Himself in the way of grace; but there must always be this supply from the Head. This is just what we get brought out in the Philadelphian church; for that which characterised it was weakness—only a little power, but a much greater nearness to Him who is power, a greater degree of affection to the Lord, more intimacy of communion with Him, and in the promises made to it a much more definite identification with Himself.

Weakness is that which characterised the church of Philadelphia, but then it was without reproach from the Lord. And we must ever remember this, that though God may give an outward display of power, such as gifts of healing, tongues, and the like, as a testimony to the world, or these may all have come to an end, yet at all times, either with or without this outward manifestation of power, the sense of weakness is competent strength if mixed with faith. There may be trouble of heart along with this sense of weakness without unbelief. There was this sense of the surrounding sorrow in the Lord Jesus. “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.” But thus we see the sorrow was the very thing which immediately linked Him with His Father.

But, alas! in us there is too often such a getting into communion with the sorrow itself, such a turning of our souls to the thoughts of sorrow, as to lead to the distrusting God’s competency to meet it. For, instead of saying, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy

comforts delight my soul," we are turning about in the multitude of our thoughts to think what is to be done, and thus looking at and occupying ourselves about circumstances, or what we find within us, so as to keep God out altogether; but this was never the case with the Lord Jesus. For the moment the hour of sorrow appeared before His soul, the immediate cry was, "Father, save me from this hour." But if we are thinking about our own weakness in any other way than to lead us to immediate dependence upon the strength of God, God with us and God for us, it is unbelief.

It is not, moreover, a sense of the greatness of God's gifts and revelations to us in which our strength lies. For signs and miracles do not give inward strength; they may confirm His word to us in times of trial, but can never impart inward strength; and it is of importance clearly to understand this. Take, for instance, the case of Paul, who was caught up into the third heaven, and heard there things which it was not possible for him to utter. An amazing thing this, and doubtless it was a kind of back-ground for Paul's soul to rest upon in his trials, his having been in the third heaven. But it did not give him inward strength. On the contrary, the flesh, without God's overruling care, would have been puffed up, and this is not strength; but when he got something that made him sensible of his own weakness, then strength from God could come in. And so it is with us: our hearts are so treacherous, and our flesh so wicked, that if not watched against, we should abuse everything that the Lord makes known to us. We need not stop here to enquire what Paul's "thorn in the flesh "was, although it is often made the subject of much fruitless enquiry, out of mere curiosity; but this we would remark, that each

one of us will have a different thorn according to the danger we are in. Thus much we know from Galatians 4:13, 14, that it was something which tended to make him despicable in the flesh, thus producing sensible weakness in his ministry. And, therefore, Paul cried thrice to the Lord to remove it; to which the Lord replied, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul must realise this sense of weakness in order to learn where real strength lies; and then he can glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him; as he says, “When I am weak, then am I strong.”

There is always strength in looking to God; but if the mind rest upon the weakness otherwise than to cast it upon God, it becomes unbelief. Difficulties may come in. God may allow many things to arise to prove our weakness; but the simple path of faith is to go on, not looking beforehand at what we have to do, but reckoning upon the help that we shall need, and find when the time arrives. The sense that we are nothing makes us glad to forget ourselves, and then it is that Christ becomes everything to the soul. There is real strength in pursuing the simple path of obedience in what we may have to do, whatever the trial may be. So it was with David when he had to fight. “The Lord, that delivered me out of the paw of the bear, and out of the paw of the lion, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” It was no matter to David whether it was the lion, the bear, or this giant of the Philistines; it was all the same to him, for in himself he was as weak in the presence of one as the other; but he went on quietly doing his duty, taking it for granted that God would be with him. This is faith. Mark the contrast with this in the

unbelief of the spies sent by Moses to spy out the land. They trembled and said they were but as grasshoppers in the sight of their enemies, thus quite forgetting what God was for them, and making it a question between themselves and the Anakims, instead of between the Anakims and God. But where there is a simple reference to the Lord, then “I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.” When trouble comes in, we must not be looking at ourselves, but, knowing that we are nothing but weakness, simply look to the Lord as everything in the way of strength for us.

The case of Philadelphia was one of decided weakness, but faithfulness; there may be great apparent power and yet weakness itself. As the Holy Ghost says in i Corinthians, there may be the speaking with the tongues of men and angels, the understanding of all mysteries, and all knowledge, and yet there may be, at the same time, the most perfect weakness, because all this was not done in communion with God. There is nothing more dangerous than to have the outward manifestation of power going beyond the inward association and communion of soul with God; the life within must be equal to the outward display of power. We have lately alluded to this in the case of Elijah.

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true.” Here in Philadelphia we have the Lord in His moral character, and not in the character of personal power as the Son of God, but as the “holy and the true,” presenting Himself as a standard of judgment as to everything inconsistent with Himself, and suiting Himself in grace to the condition and need of His faithful ones, and by His truth giving a means of judgment, and security of heart and confidence to the saints. And we also find Him disposing

of means in favour of the church, in such a way that, if He opens a door, none can shut it, or if He shuts a door, none can open it. Thus there are the two things: He is the holy and the true, to those who trust in Him; and He has also, not here indeed the display of power, but the key of power (as Jehovah said of Eliakim to Shebna in Isaiah 22:22: “The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open”). So that, where there is this weakness, He encourages the church to look to Himself as the holy and the true, and trust Him; and where there is this resting on His title to open and shut, and this trust in His Person, and conformity to His character, the church is perfectly secure, no matter what may happen. Let all the power of man or Satan do their worst, if I am resting in Christ, who is perfectly true, and He has opened a door, neither man nor devil can shut it.

How analogous is this position of the Philadelphian church to that of Christ when He was on the earth! Everybody sought to shut the door against Him; Pilate, Herod, Scribes, Pharisees, and the whole nation of the Jews were all trying to shut the door against Christ. Christ, like the Philadelphian church, was in the midst of an order of things which God had once instituted, but which had entirely failed; for in Christ’s time there was no ark, no Urim and Thummim, no Shechinah (the glory of God’s presence in the temple). All that had really constituted the sensible display of power and testimony was gone, and, instead of Jehovah having a throne in Jerusalem, they themselves had fallen under Gentile power and were slaves to man’s throne. And hence arose the exceeding subtlety of the question the Jews

put to our Lord. “What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?” If the Lord had answered No, it would have been the denial of God’s chastisement for their sins; and if He had said Yes, then it went to the denial of His title as Messiah. But (the Lord perceiving their wickedness), His reply to them amounted to this, “You have brought yourselves under this dominion because of your sins, and therefore now you must submit to its authority.” Not only “the powers that be are ordained of God,” and as such we submit to them; but in Israel’s case it would have been denying God’s chastisement upon them for their sins (as it is said, “we are slaves this day because of our sins”).

So the Lord Himself submitted to paying the temple tribute. But though Israel, as a body, failed in their faithfulness to God, yet God could not fail in His faithfulness to them, for His Spirit remained among them, as we learn in Haggai; and therefore we find there was a little remnant in the Annas and Simeons, who were waiting for redemption in Israel (as it is said in Malachi, “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another”). Thus we see it was a condition of thorough darkness, and when He who was the Light comes in, He is at once rejected. Well, what then? Was the door shut to Him? No: “to him the porter openeth.” Christ came in at the door, not, like all the pretenders that came before Him, climbing up some other way; but while working in divine power Christ came in by God’s own appointed way, and no man could shut it. He is become God’s appointed way to us; He said of Himself, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

Whatever links our position with Christ, as an example and pattern, is in truth a blessing to us; for was there

ever one that went through all with such unfailing, lowly faithfulness to God as He did? Note the contrast of His lowly path with that of Elijah's; and what do we see? Elijah was going on ministering with great outward power, bringing down fire from heaven to destroy the prophets of Baal, and thinking himself to be the only one that was left that was true to God; whereas God had seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, whom Elijah had not found out. Christ was content to be nothing in a world where man was everything and God was shut out. He was content to be treated as the very off-scouring of the earth; and yet, at the same time, there was not a single lost sheep of the house of Israel that His voice did not reach as the voice of the good Shepherd (let them be the vilest of sinners, a woman of Samaria, an adulteress, or a publican), that His eye did not discover. Thus, in virtue of His very humiliation, He puts those who now have but this "little strength" into the very same place which He Himself took, and then, as the porter did for Him, He opens the door for them, which none can shut.

We are waiting for the glory: "the glory thou hast given me I have given them"; and while thus waiting we have to pass through that which has "Ichabod" written on it (the glory hath departed). The testimony of this dispensation in its public power is gone, never to be recovered. What the Lord is pressing upon them is, that they are not to suppose that the evil, such as that of Thyatira and Sardis, can be put in order; but He says, "Behold, I come quickly! hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown"; that is, keep the word of My patience till I come. Thus we find ourselves in circumstances analogous to Christ; for when the Lord

says, “Behold, I come quickly,” it is to the end that we may get into greater likeness to Christ’s position, and although trying and humbling, yet one of blessing, finding ourselves just in the same position which Jesus took, with the same promise—an open door which none can shut. This is present faith; it is not much strength that we want: the thing most needed is greater conformity to the position of Christ.

Observe another thing peculiar to this church of Philadelphia. The Lord does not set about canvassing their works, but leaves the heart of these poor weak ones satisfied with the consciousness that He knows them. To the other churches it was not so; He notices the character of their works. To Sardis He said, “I have not found thy works perfect before God.” But it is sufficient for us that He knows our works. O what a comfort it is, for if we had to look for perfection, as in Sardis, we should find it very troublesome to give in the account. The mixture of things, the little faith, would dismay us. In fact, none of our works have answered to the grace received. There is plenty of activity, there is much that man may approve, but taking the general character of service, how difficult to find that which God can approve! Then again, if we get occupied with the state of things in the world around us, and in the church of God itself, our hearts would sink within us, did we not fall back on this most blessed truth, that Christ knows all about it.

But then does He say that they have nothing? No; He says, “Thou hast kept my word” That which characterised Christ must be the characteristic of the church of God. Christ could say, “Thy word have I hid in my heart”; and this is especially the characteristic of

faithfulness in the last days. Paul in writing to Timothy says, “In the last days perilous times shall come,” and there would be a terrible form of godliness without power; for even then the mystery of iniquity had come in, “and evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” But the safeguard is, “but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures” —the plain written word, what we call the Bible, read from his youth. Security would not be in the manifestation of outward power, nor yet in miracles, but simply in the written word. This was the instrument of blessing; this the recognised authority with Timothy. Of course the grace of God was needed for his conversion. I refer to this now, as the keeping close to the word is the special security of these latter days (namely, the special authority of the word of God itself, just what Timothy, as a child, found in the Scriptures); and added to this, of course with Timothy, was that which he had learned from the apostles, equally inspired, and which was thus a known immediately-divine authority in a person “of whom,” says the apostle, “you have learned it,” and which since has become the written word to us. The written word of God is where all our security lies through grace.

The Lord does not say “You have strength,” but “You have kept my word”; and then further He does not say “You have known me in this or that character,” but “You have not denied my name.” The Lord’s name means always the revelation of what He is; as if He be called Christ, He is the Anointed One. The Lord is here saying, that as you have stuck fast to Me as revealed, now I will

make them which have a false name and pretences “to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” Here we get the two characters contrasted; and also mark the emphasis on the word “My”: it is Christ’s word upon which I am called to rest; “My word”—the word of Christ Himself, to come in personal communion with Christ Himself—not even the church’s word. Suppose, for instance, I take the church’s word, that is, to assume that the church has authority; but if I take Christ’s word, then I have the authority of Christ Himself; and it is by the word of Christ that I must judge everything about the church itself. And the word of Christ connects us with Christ, His name and Person; and these are the two things which are especially essential for us to have, to enable us to walk contrary to the seductions which we know are peculiar to the last days. It is seductive power which characterises these times, “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.”

In speaking in a general way of the character of the times, we look for seductive power. There will be a distinct and definite Antichrist, who will shew it in another way, but “even now there are many Antichrists”; therefore we have “earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” If he, whose coming is after the power of Satan, with signs and lying wonders, shall prevail against those who “receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved,” we have need to hold fast that which will guard us against him who will come in as an angel of light; but it is those who have not received the love of the truth who fall into his snares. And this safeguard we have in the word of Christ

Himself— keeping the word of His patience, and not denying His name. It must be an individual thing, for seductive power, having come in, marks the times in which we live to be “perilous times,” not by open persecution and the like; but as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so our minds are in danger of being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. And what have we to deliver us from this? Is it the outward manifestation of power, miracles, etc.? No, we have no outward power wherewith to meet Satan, we are weakness itself— “thou hast a little strength”; but our safeguard is in this, each soul individually for itself, holding fast the written word of Christ, and not denying His name.

It seems not much to say of them, “Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name,” for there was not much done by them. But, dear friends, when the seductive power of evil was there it was saying everything of them; when all that was going on was to the setting aside of the written word, they kept it; and when everything went to the denial of Christ’s name, they did not deny His name. That which is a great thing in God’s sight is, not the calling down fire from heaven as Elijah did, but the being faithful amidst surrounding unfaithfulness. So likewise it did not seem to be saying much for the seven thousand who did not conform to the gross act of worshipping Baal, merely to say that they had “not bowed the knee to Baal,” but it was, in truth, saying everything for them, because they were surrounded by all those who did bow the knee to Baal. So likewise the church of God was at first set up in power, but tares were plentifully sown among the wheat, and that which marks out the faithful ones is simply this,

that when the seductive power of evil comes in, they are not seduced and led away by it. It is not in the manifestation of outward power, but simple faithfulness in walking with God in the midst of evil. Thus in the church of Philadelphia there was faithfulness of walk which gave them inward power, although no outward display of power.

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.” Here we find this individual faithfulness in a secret walk with God, contrasted with those who cling to something established, where there was abundance of form, a fair show in the flesh, boasting themselves to be Jews, and attempting to set up again that which used to be the outward characteristic of the people of God, not seeing that “new” thing which God had now set up, and which now puts the heart to the test. They do not reject the word of God (the Jews did not either); but it is not God’s word that governs them. The Jews received the Scriptures, but they rejected Christ, and killed Him; as Jesus Himself said, “They will put you out of the synagogue.” Nor was it without, the notion that they were serving God in doing so: “The time cometh that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” But this was pure rejection of the light God sent: “And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor me.” Any old truth which has gained credit in the world so as to be accounted orthodox, fails to put the heart to the test. It accredits nature: one is esteemed for it. If I can take religion and accredit myself with it, instead of having the heart put to the test by it in the exercise of faith, I may be quite sure that it is not the religion of God. Though it may be the truth as far as

it goes, it is not faith in God. That is what this synagogue of the Jews were doing. They were setting aside Christ's name and Christ's word, for that which could be rested upon where there was no heart for Christ. Tradition, ordinances, ancestry, etc., were the things they loved, and not the word of Christ for themselves. It is quite true that the Jews had been God's people; but they had rejected and trampled under feet the name of Christ. And this is what makes all the difference; for now that Christ has been manifested what God is looking for is faithful obedience to His Son. Faithful adherence to Christ now is everything.

"I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." God did not own these pretenders to religious antiquity as His people. All they would get was just to know that Christ had loved this poor despised remnant: "To know that I have loved thee!" See now what the heart has to be satisfied with— not the present acknowledgment from those who profess to know God, while in works they deny Him, but the calm, settled confidence that Christ loves it. This it is which puts the heart to the test. If you want present enjoyment, bright pictures set before the mind, taste gratified, imagination fed, men gained, something of "reverend antiquity"; Christ is not in any of these things. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"; and He Himself is the Truth— "holy and true." And if we have the love of Jesus as a present thing in our souls, we have all we want in Him.

There are plenty of people asking, What is truth? With such these pretensions may have weight. The synagogue of Satan may be religion, ancient, and reverend, full of gorgeous attractions, and what has authority over the

flesh (and accepted for us by those who, like Pilate, asked What is truth? and then crucified Jesus, who is the Truth, to please the priests of the day). The character of these last days is just this, that men are always seeking, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. I have no need to be asking, what is truth, if I have it; what a man seeks he has not got. A man that is always hunting after truth acknowledges by his actions that he has not got it. Christ said, I am the truth; He is the centre of all truth, and is the ground of everything that connects us with God. An infidel will raise doubts about everything, but establishes nothing; but we want something that is certain. The moment we have the Person of Christ, we have the Truth: “no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Do I want to know what God is? what man is? I get in Christ a perfect picture of what God is to man, and what He is as a man to God. It is all in Christ: of course we have to advance in the knowledge of it. The heart that has Christ wants not the synagogue of Satan; the heart that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true. The soul knowing this is in the simplest way kept from evil. I have got grace too as well as truth— “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

When I was living in a lie, it was grace that brought the truth to my mind; and what can a soul want more? It has sorrow indeed, by reason of the denied place through which it is now passing; but there is no more uncertainty about its portion, it has got all in Christ. There is nothing wanting to add to the secret blessing. “I will make them to come and worship before thy feet” (that is, in the sense of doing homage) “and to know that I

have loved thee." We know it now, not as deserving it indeed, for it is all of grace; but we have the present enjoyment of it through Christ's presence. We know that love of Christ which passes knowledge indeed, and the Father's love too; as He says, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." The world does not know it now, but in that day the world shall know that the Father loved us as He loved His Son. When the heart gets hold of this love of Christ to it, it rests there; it is satisfied with the present enjoyment of Christ's love, although those around know nothing of the approbation it conveys to the heart. The Lord is now in various ways weaning our hearts from everything around us, in order that we may find, in the testimony of His personal love to us, that which strengthens our faith, settles the conscience, and guides the heart. Christ says, "I am the door," and that is the warrant for the sheep following Him out. In the time of Christ there was the Jewish order of things which God had set up; and there was no warrant for getting out of this Jewish system until Christ went out; but the heart, drawn and attached to Christ, had the special warrant of going after Him outside the established system—"following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

In this church of Philadelphia we have the promise which met the hope which the faithful had of being with Christ in glory. Identification with Him in His position connects them with Himself, and with the word of His patience. They had not all the professing church of one mind with them; and they were not yet enjoying the full result of His love (not having Christ personally and fully present with them, I mean); and if Christ's love is to be

the guide of my conduct, what the heart wants is, that Christ should be with it, for if we love a person we surely want to be with him But having Christ in our hearts, we are keeping the word of His patience. Such is a trying, sifting, purging, exercising time, no doubt, but we must wait. And mark, further, how this blessed identification and connection with Himself is kept up all through, as it is not simply the word of patience, but "My patience." And why "My patience"? Because Christ is still waiting (see Psalm no); and it is this which determines all our conduct, for if Christ is waiting we must wait also. Christ has to wait in a state of expectancy, so to speak, in the exercise of patience, for the Father's time; and it is in this sense, I doubt not, that He is said not to know the time which the Father hath put in His own power. Christ has done all that was needed for His friends to present them to God, and is set down at the right hand of God, "expecting till his foes be made his footstool." Christ is waiting until He gathers in all His friends before He does, as He says, His "strange work "on the earth, in dealing with His foes. And hence this word of "My patience" is just what is needed, for we are waiting for that day of which Christ tells us (John 14), "I will come again and receive you unto myself."

We see all creation groaning around us, waiting for that day; and we too groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the body; but all is in disorder till then. Where are the Jews, "still beloved for the fathers' sake"? They are as vagabonds and wanderers upon the face of the whole earth, without priest, without teraphim, without anything, as a teil tree and an oak when it has cast its leaves, though the Lord is working among them. If I look at the world all is sin and misery. If I look at

every created thing it is groaning. Look at what calls itself the church: the universal cry is, “Who will shew us any good” —who is satisfied with anything? I do not speak thus in the bad sense of dissatisfaction; but there is nothing on which the soul can rest. It is no matter: take whatever system you will. The general feeling is, that all the foundations of the world are out of course. The raven indeed may go and light upon some dead floating carcase; but the dove can find no rest for the sole of her foot, save in the ark.

And what have we in the midst of the dense darkness of the night on which to rest our souls? Nothing but the certain expectation of the coming of the bright and morning Star. How long will Christ be waiting till He can deal in judgment, and when can He do this? When He has got His friends with Him, then He begins to act in the character of Judge, not indeed that He will at once cut them all off, but then it is that He will take to Himself His great power. What He is specially waiting for is, that those who have His portion should be with Himself and as Himself. We are predestinated to be conformed to His image. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied,” when He gets His bride with Himself and as Himself. If the mighty man, the mystic man, the man-child of Revelation 12 is to act, He must first be complete (of course He is so, essentially so, in Himself, but as Head over all things to the church which is His body). The head and the body must be united before He can act as having this title before the world; because the mystic man as a whole cannot take it until the church is. taken up to Him. For not until then—until the church, the body, is united to the Head, Christ, in heaven—is the mystic man in that sense complete;

and therefore, the church must be taken up before Christ can come in judgment.

What is the great hindrance to the full blessing of the church now? All from the beginning have failed: Adam, man before the flood, Noah, man under law. Then take Christianity— how have the tares been sown among the wheat! Priesthood, through the influence of Satan, taking the place of Christ, and our union with Him. After this—summed up in the final apostasy, the acting of judicial power to set aside the evil begins. The first act of power, when the mystic man is complete, will be to cast Satan and his angels down (Rev. 12:9), to cast them out of heaven; and they are never seen there any more at all, but they are cast down into the earth; and then the devil has great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time; and, in his great rage, he stirs up all things in his full character of adversary against the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Lord will come with His saints to execute judgment upon the earth. He must set things to rights by removing the evil. And as soon as His enemies are made His footstool, then He brings in the fulness of blessing. But we must keep in mind that the judgment is consequent upon the association of the church with Christ. The mystic man must be complete, in that sense of it, before He can execute judgment. Then Christ takes an entirely different character. Until He takes us up into the glory, He is presented as a Saviour (and even then, there will be doubtless—after the church's removal—a saved remnant). But then the acceptable time is ended; and then in "righteousness he doth judge and make war." And when He comes forth thus, we shall fully understand why it is the word of His patience now; for till then, till He take unto Him His great power and

reign, we are linked with Him in heart and mind in the word of His patience; and the blessing of this to us is our association with Christ Himself, the perfect linking up with Christ in all things. As a Man (not at all touching the divine glory of His Person, but as taking the official character of a servant) Christ has to wait until God in His good pleasure puts all things under His feet; and this, I doubt not, as I have said, is the meaning of the words— "of that day knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father." But thus linked up with Christ, and having His present love as the satisfying portion of the soul, we had rather wait and have it with Him, that have it before Him. Thorough association with Christ Himself is the proper character of the church of God; for it is not merely that it is blest, but that it is associated with Him who blesses. We are His bride: this is our proper place; and whenever we descend from this, we get away from the full power of God's thoughts of love about us and about what He has made Christ to be for us.

Whatever is said of Christ in the day of glory, we find the church is associated with Him in it all—in His Melchisedec character, for instance, the highest place in authority as King, and the nearest in worship as Priest: we also are made kings and priests. Eve was associated with Adam in the dominion; but there was nothing in the whole creation which could have had this place. As it is written, "for Adam there was not a help-meet found for him"; but when Eve, as the bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, was brought to him he could say, "This is now [now, this time, for that is the force of the original], bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." There was a help meet found for him. This is equally true of the Lord and the church, for He can say, "now this is bone of my

bones, and flesh of my flesh," and can rejoice and delight in the production of His own love.

The Lord forbid that we should sink down from this our true place; and may He give unto us a deep and abiding sense of our being thus linked up in full blessed association with Himself; for the heart of Christ could not be satisfied without it, and neither should ours. It is not a question of our worthiness (for in ourselves, as in flesh, we are vile sinners), but of Christ's affection. True humbleness is not to think evil of ourselves, but not to think about ourselves at all. But, mark, it is a much harder thing to forget self, than even to have evil thoughts about self. If we are not humble, we must be humbled.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee," etc. The Lord says, If I own you as keeping "the word of my patience," and not as having any strength, but as in connection with myself, then "I will keep thee," etc. Thus He connects us with Himself, a poor feeble folk though we be, like the conies who were but a feeble folk, yet made their nest in the rock. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Now as regards the consequences, what a comfort is here! It was not a question of strength at all, but of being kept from a terrible time that was coming, "to try them that dwell upon the earth." These last words describe the moral condition of a class.

Do you suppose that God takes pleasure in afflicting His His people? No, in truth He does not want to put you into temptation; but if you have got into a position in which you are mixed up with these dwellers on the

earth, upon whom the hour of temptation is coming, you must be dealt with to be delivered from that on which that dreadful hour is coming. The gospel is preached now, and is taking out souls from the world; and the whole thoughts, feelings, desires, and affections of the saints should be looking out for the day of glory. And if they have got into Christ's place of patience, they do not want sifting as the world does; but if they are mixed up with the world, they must be sharers in the troubles of the hour of temptation which is coming to try those who dwell upon the earth, or practically sifted before to be rescued from it. A time is coming when the beast will blaspheme those that dwell in heaven, but he cannot touch them. When we know our heavenly character, it makes us strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, instead of dwelling here, and seeking our portion here; but those who are dwellers here must come into this hour of temptation which is coming to try those who dwell on the earth. And mark here, that this is a distinct thing from the tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24. That time of trouble is confined to Jerusalem; as it is said in Jeremiah, "it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." But here, this is a time of trouble, "which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Those who have kept the word of Christ's patience now, He will keep from that time. If the Lord is now getting fruit from them in a way which this temptation is intended to produce, then there will be no need for them to be tried by it.

But now, see how He encourages them: "Behold, I come quickly," as if He should say, "You must go on" bearing My lot in patience, and in the cross too, if you will share My lot and glory; but "I come quickly." It is not His

coming, as presented to Sardis, as a thief in the night; but what Christ would press upon the church now is, that His return is a speedy thing. He does not tell them the moment, but puts His coming before them as their comfort, joy, and hope, and thus fixes the heart upon Himself; as it is not so much that He is coming quickly, but that it is Himself that is coming, "I, Jesus," etc. etc. Oh! if the heart has tasted God's love, what comfort it is after all to rest in Himself, as at the close of this book. After Christ has led the mind of the church through those things which He is going to do on earth, then He brings back the heart of the church to Himself— "I, Jesus."

That which characterises the church of Philadelphia is its immediate connection with Himself; it is Christ Himself who is coming. It is neither knowledge nor prophecy that can satisfy the heart; but the thought that Jesus is coming to take me to Himself is the blessed hope of one who is attached to Him by grace. Prophecy concerns Christ's coming to the earth; but my going to Christ is the proper and blessed hope of one united to Christ by faith. I solemnly respect and reverence God's warning about coming judgment, etc.; but it is not a matter of affection. God's purposes about Jerusalem, Babylon, etc., of which prophecy speaks, are most important and instructive to the mind; but the affections are not drawn out by knowing about the doom of Babylon, and Antichrist. I love Christ; therefore I long to see Him. But prophecies of coming judgment do not connect the spirit and heart with the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Then we have this warning: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Oh! may the Lord

give us to keep His word, and to be looking for Him as a present thing. If the devil could take away the hope of the Lord's coming as a present thing, this would be taking away our hope and crown. No man or devil can take away anything from us, if we have but that clear sense of faith which connects us with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as a present thing. To lose this is to lose spiritual power; and anything that robs us of spiritual power in our association with Christ, is to rob us of present blessing, and of that which is the path towards our crown. And, beloved brethren, we are now going through every kind of thing that is likely to rob us of our crown— everything which puts faith in a coming Jesus to the test, and calls it in question.

In the case of the ten virgins, they all slumbered and slept; the wise were as fast asleep as the foolish, and at midnight, when the cry was made, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" they all rose and trimmed their lamps. There was no difference in this respect; but the one had the oil of the Spirit, the other not; and between the cry going forth and the actual coming of the Bridegroom, there was plenty of time for the lamps to be going out if not supplied with oil; and hence the manifest difference between the virgins was in the supply of oil which they had. If the first thought in the hearts of the foolish virgins had been the Bridegroom Himself, they would have been thinking of the light that He would want when He came; but they were occupied with other things, satisfied with merely keeping company with the virgins. The dress, and the lamps without the oil, would suffice to place them among the company; but alas! without the oil they could not keep their lamps burning for their Lord till He came. Still,

there were those who were fitted to receive Him, “and when the Bridegroom came, they that were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut.” And so it is with us. The cry has gone forth, and between this and His actual coming the Lord is testing us whether our hearts are set upon Him or not.

We have now only time left to consider the promise: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God,” etc. Here we see how definitely all the promises are connected with the time of glory—the “new Jerusalem”—here the heart is lifted up into its own proper dwelling-place. Are we taking the position of heavenly dwellers while walking this earth? Remark in how thorough a manner the saints are connected with the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling-place of him that overcometh. He shall be in God’s temple, in contrast with the synagogue of Satan, in the full enjoyment of the things of God (every purpose of His love fully brought out). “Him will I make a pillar” He who was a faithful but weak one in the earth, when the professing church was great but not fulfilling the purpose of God as the “pillar and ground of the truth,” shall then be the very pillar of strength, and that the very strength of God, because there had been firmness against the power of seduction.

It is always “my God.” Throughout Christ keeps up this connection with Himself. He was once in appearance the weak one on the earth; He says, “I have been rejected and you have taken the place of rejection with Me, and I know you have been faithful to Me; I go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.” He is the patient One who waits the Father’s time for the glory which is due to Him, and we have part in His patience.

“I will write upon him the name of my God,” the way in which Christ as a man knows God: “You shall have that name publicly set upon you, as you have not denied My name down here— ‘the city of my God,’ waited for in faith; this is your place.” Abraham looked for a city, whose builder and maker was God. It was a heavenly city they wanted for themselves on the earth, even when the flesh had built one here. This heavenly citizenship shall then be stamped upon the faithful, in the city of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the stranger on the earth. If men are looking for an ecclesiastical stability, a present establishment of things, they can have it now; but then it is not according to God’s word: if content to walk simply with Christ now, waiting until God owns a city as His (“the city of my God”), they shall have it then: it comes down out of heaven from God. When Charles II was away from his country, those who were attached to his person felt themselves strangers in the land while their master was absent. And so it is with the Christian now; he belongs to Christ; he is a child of the day, waiting for Christ and the day of His appearing.

“My new name.” It is not the old name of Messiah, but His wondrous new name, taken as the result of a heavenly redemption. We shall have what is stable then, though we have it not now in one sense.

May the Lord give us to know what it is to be really associated with Christ Himself, and to know this blessed thought of God about us, “that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace,” etc. He has associated us with the object of all His infinite delight—His eternal delight; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and therefore have the privilege and portion of Jesus Himself. May God

keep our hearts untainted by this present evil world and in freshness of affection to Himself. This can only be by keeping in communion with Christ Himself. To know our portion in Him, to know the value of His name, gives courage and strength to keep His word and not deny His name.

Lecture 7

I had thought and hoped to have closed our consideration of this portion of scripture last evening; but I am not sorry now that time then forbade it, as I feel very strongly the importance of this last address to Laodicea. And it will give me the opportunity of taking up more generally what we have been going through in connection with the testimony of the word of God to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see in this address to the church of Laodicea, that it is threatened with final and complete judgment, without any possibility of escape whatever. It is not indeed that it has yet arrived at the full consummation of evil; for if it had, where would be the use of warning it? This church of Laodicea, as all the other six churches before, is addressed as having the character of the church of God (that is, as holding before God the position of acknowledged testimony of Him for the world); and as such it is threatened with rejection. This is important in connection with other parts of scripture. It is not the history of that which has been accomplished, but the warning and threat of that which is coming. Hence its character is prophetical. And as the whole book of Revelation is judgment, so likewise, in these addresses to the churches, we get the judgment of the professing church, standing under God’s eye, as holding this

position. And I would here recall to your memory what I have said before, and what it is important to remember, that what is before us in all these churches is not the work of God's grace in itself; for these addresses to the churches would have no place if it were—nor yet Christ the Head of the body, as the source of grace to the members—nor yet is it the work of the Spirit of God, as that of course is never the subject of judgment; as also the grace which flows down from the Head to the members can never fail. This can never be the subject either of warnings or threatenings. It is the condition and state of the church which is here shewn forth, as holding the place of responsibility under the eye of God, and the consequent dealings of Christ with it, in the expectation of fruit.

Further, these addresses are not to individuals, but to churches; still there is a great deal to be gathered from these addresses by individuals who have an ear, through the instruction of the Holy Ghost: I trust that we even now have gathered a little of such instruction. The promises also are to individuals, "to him that overcometh" in the midst of evil circumstances, but the dealing is with the body.

It is not then the supply of the Spirit of grace from the Head, nor yet the directions through the Spirit of the Father's love dealing with the children within, because that supposes the church to be in an accepted and healthy state, and gives them directions suited to that state, and answering to the purpose for which it was called into church position. In Laodicea there is that which cannot apply to individuals; you may give warning to individuals in the church of God, "while the simple pass on and are punished." But this is not mere warning;

excision is announced, and that can never apply to a saint of God. “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” It is the excision of the external professing body, which bears the name of the church, as such. This leads us to see the important truth of the responsibility of the professing church of God on the earth; therefore it is I am so glad of this opportunity of going over again the general principles connected with this.

“Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” The character of Christ given here is remarkable. In the last three churches we have seen that Christ leaves, so to speak, the characteristics given of Him in chapter 1 (that is, He is not presented in any part of the character that He takes in chapter 1); but we find a new special revelation of Himself according to the circumstances of the church addressed. It is not the same traits of character given of Him as those John had seen in the vision; it does not connect itself thus with the things “seen,” but with “the things that are,” in a new and distinct condition from that in which they had stood in their original relationship with Christ; and therefore, a fresh revelation of Christ is made for the need and occasion of the church.

In Philadelphia, Christ was not known in the same character in which He was known in Thyatira, as “Son over his own house,” but fresh traits of His character were to be seized by the church for its particular need. From the same period of time, and even before, that is, from the time of the complete corruption of its original - standing, the coming of the Lord is held out to the

church. The saint could no longer occupy himself with the hope of the restoration of the church as a professing whole, and therefore the coming of the Lord is placed before it as its only resource, that the faithful remnant might look out for Him, finding in Christ that which they could lean upon and trust in} when the outward ground was slipping from under their feet. Those who had special faith in Jesus could not float on with the common stream of the thoughts of the church; for if they did, they would find themselves with Jezebel, or with Sardis, having a name to live and yet dead. Faith has need to be sustained in a peculiar manner, in order to keep me from the seductions of the “synagogue of Satan.” Common grace will do when the church itself is in its place, but uncommon grace is needed to sustain the faithful when the church is not keeping its place. If Jezebel be there, I cannot go on with common faith; Christ and falsehood cannot go oh together. If it be a name to live, being dead, I must have something special to sustain the life in me. Therefore, whether it be Jezebel seducing,119 or Babylon corrupting, or Laodicea going to be spued out, I could not go on content with the moral state of things. Therefore I should need special grace suited to it, discerned by spiritual-minded-ness alone, not being the natural relationship between Christ and the church as such. Of course we at all times need the sustaining grace of God, we cannot get on without it, as everyone knows; I need it—you need it—we all need it. But when that which bears the name of the church of God is nigh unto cursing, is going to be spued out, then a double measure and peculiar character of grace is needed to sustain the faithful ones in the narrow and often lonely path in which they will be called to walk. And mark here, when they had got into the Philadelphian state of things,

with its little strength, and keeping Christ's word, and not denying His name, the coming of the Lord is brought in for the comfort of the faithful ones; and then the subject is dropped.

Now here, though the professing church still subsists in form, yet it is utterly rejected, and it is unconditionally declared that Christ will spue it out of His mouth. The judgment is not accomplished, but it is certain and assumed as such. And the reason why the coming of the Lord is dropped after Philadelphia is, that, the whole thing being morally gone and the subject of judgment, the Lord presents Himself as outside in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." If there are still saints within, the testimony to them is as from without the scene of which they make a part. In Philadelphia, all dealing with the saints as maintaining them in a place of testimony is closed; for the professing church had then become either Jezebel in corruption, or Sardis in death, so that it should be judged as the world; and the remnant had the testimony as keeping the word of Christ's patience, and are comforted by the assurance that Christ will come quickly. Now they were to be content with the assurance that then the synagogue of Satan would know that Christ had loved them.

In the church of Philadelphia, the character of Christ's coming was put in its true and proper place. Looked at by the church, Christ's coming is for itself. Christ says, "It is for you I am coming," and the church's hope is to see Himself. It is "you" and "myself," He says, that must be together, constituting the proper church character of hope and accomplished joy. Hence in chapter 22, after the Lord has gone through the whole prophecy, He says, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these

things, in the churches”— “I am the bright and morning star”; and the presentation of Himself awakens the cry to Him to come. He does not say, when warning men, “Behold, I come quickly.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come,” and then, in heart-assuring reply, He says, “Surely, I come quickly”; to which the church responds, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Thus it is very evident that the coming of the Lord to take the church unto Himself, must be something entirely between Himself and the church alone. But it will not be so with the remnant of Israel, for them the execution of the judgment will be needed, in order to their taking their place in the earth. In fact, the Lord’s coming to the earth itself must be attended with the execution of judgment, gathering out of His “kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” And it is evident that the deliverance of the remnant of Israel connects the coming of the Lord with the execution of judgment upon what despises Him before Israel can possibly get their blessing. And this accounts for the strong cry of vengeance we find throughout the Psalms; take Psalm 94 for instance, “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.” Now we do not want vengeance in order to be with Christ in blessing. God has given us grace as our portion in every way, and we have to deal entirely with grace. I am not looking for the Lord to come and avenge me on my enemies, for I am expecting to be caught up to meet Him in the air. And, that it may be clearly understood, I would again remark, that throughout the whole Scriptures this cry, in connection with the Lord’s coming to the earth, is the language of the remnant of Israel, and not the language of the church of God.

Take Psalm 68:23, “that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.” These are not the thoughts that occupy my soul in the contemplation of meeting Jesus in the air. If, through grace, I have bowed to the grace of the Lamb, then I have no connection whatever with that which will come under the wrath of the Lamb. It is Himself that I am expecting for the sake of what is in Himself apart from anything else. So also in the description of the future Jewish times of blessing in Isaiah 60:12, “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish”; while of the New Jerusalem it is said, “The leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations.” Israel is the scene of God’s righteous judgments; the church is the scene of God’s sovereign grace; and it never gets out of this. For the church, as such, never calls for vengeance; it will see the righteousness of the vengeance when God shall avenge the blood of those who have suffered, and rejoice that corruption is destroyed; but its own portion is to be with Christ. The earth will be delivered through judgment; but our portion is to meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with Him.

The church of Philadelphia having its proper portion, the coming of the Lord, the subject of this blessed hope closes. In Laodicea, therefore, there is nothing about the coming of the Lord, although it remains true of course, but still it is not put before it. It is another thing which is in hand; and here the prophet character comes in, because the Lord is here speaking of that which was about to happen in judgment. He is going to judge the church itself. It is always the professing church He speaks of (we must remember), that which takes the

place of the church of God, as the testimony for God in the world. And mark now the peculiar character Christ takes here; if the church, this vessel of testimony for God, this witness, is set aside by the Lord in disgust, then the Lord comes in Himself as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness," not so much in the dignity of His Person, as shewn in chapter 1, but as the faithful and true witness— "the beginning of the creation of God," as going to take the place of that which had so entirely failed as God's witness on the earth.

In James we see the purpose of God is, "that we [the church] should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures," and the church will have that place in the fulness of restored creation. But even now the church is called to have its own peculiar place, as having the firstfruits of the Spirit; but looked at as in a position of testimony, the church has utterly failed, not holding, in the power of the Holy Ghost, this place of firstfruits of His creatures. For what are the fruits which mark that power? Are they not "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"? Do you see them in the professing church? No; and therefore it is, we say, that the professing church has failed to be this "kind of firstfruits of God's creatures"; for the professing church does not hold a place above the present state of creation or the world around it. Were a man to come to London from China, would he see these fruits of the Spirit in the professing church? or would he find the same covetousness, the same love of the world here in every way as in his own country? "O," he might say, "I could do all this in China. What Christians are doing in London (and true Christians too), I can do throughout China; though there may be a better and more refined

way of carrying them out in London than in China." But in China there are the same results; for what professed Christians are doing in London is also done in China, though it may be not so comfortably carried out as to the flesh, but quite as thoroughly as to the heart.

I do not believe that the professing church is yet fully ripened up into the final condition of Laodicea; if it were, there would be no use in warning it. God is holding the bridle, and does not yet allow the evil to be so fully developed. It was just as true in principle in Ephesus, the moment the church departed from her first love; but we do not find it developed till the Laodicean state, when Christ spues the whole thing out of His mouth. And remember it is the professing church that is thus spued out, and not the church of the living God, the body and bride of Christ. Nor is this excision a mere removal of the candlestick; for when it cannot be said of the professing church, "Ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world," then, instead of its being the object of Christ's delight, it becomes (terrible to say) a disgust to Him: "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Nothing can be more solemn than the position the professing church will arrive at, to call forth such a statement on the part of the Lord. We find also in this another remarkable testimony to the successional character of these churches. In its general character, notwithstanding the special working of grace in detail, the professing church gets worse and worse, till it comes to that condition that it has to be spued out of Christ's mouth; and then "a door is opened in heaven," and John is caught up there; Rev. 4. Then the judgment of the world commences, and the introduction of the Only Begotten to His earthly inheritance.

God has done with the church as a testimony, the moment Laodicea is spued out. And when the church has come to this entire state of failure, then Christ supplants it as the “faithful and true witness” of God. What the church should have done, Christ presents Himself as doing. Christ is the Great Amen of all God’s promises; the church should have shewn how all the promises of God were Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus; but the church has not been able to do this; it has failed to put its amen to God’s promises. Amen means “firm verity and truth.” (See Isaiah 7:9.) “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established,” that is, “if you wilt not believe [or amen, for it is the same word], ye shall not be established [amened].” The meaning is, if you will not confirm my promises, you shall not be confirmed. Of course there is not a thought of the possibility of God’s failing in His purposes in Christ, and therefore the church, the body of Christ, will be in glory with its Head: but if it is a question of testimony on the earth, then truly the church has not practically put its amen to the promises of God in Christ. For the church was called to manifest the power of its heavenly calling while walking on the earth; but it has not in its walk given the answer to that which God has affirmed. For we do not see the church giving the heavenly witness through the Holy Ghost, answering to the Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of God; and, therefore, as God cannot leave Himself without a witness, Christ immediately presents Himself as the “Amen, the faithful and true witness,” the Person who is going to seal up all the promises and prophecies, the One who puts the great amen to everything as the “faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” The professing church has failed; it contains within its pale a great mass of

people that were never converted, bearing the name of Christ without possessing the life of Christ. But the failure commenced with the true church; it was through them that corruption crept in; “they left their first love,” and then, consequently, the world came in; as God says, “I looked in the place of righteousness, and behold, iniquity was there.” As is often said, “the corruption of the best thing is the worst of corruptions”; so there is really nothing on the face of the whole earth so diametrically opposed to God, as professing Christianity.

“The beginning of the creation of God.” Christ comes in here as the blessed witness that God will yet set up creation according to His own will, Christ Himself being the chief and centre of it all. (See Proverbs 8.) It is not the promise pf Christ coming to take the church to Himself, as to Philadelphia, but Christ Himself taking the place of full and perfect testimony for God, and as the accomplisher of all God’s promises, of which the church should have been the manifestation. In this character, Christ, as it were, supplants the church in the manifestation of the purposes and promises of God, which cannot fail. If the church be irrevocably gone, the witness remains, and that will be the stay of the faithful. Here it is that faith is sustained, even where evil is rising up like a flood; here is solid ground that nothing can touch, the strength on which the soul can stay supposing the church to be gone, for the stay of every soul is trusting in Him.

I would now refer to the general testimony in the word of of God, as to the complete failure and consequent setting aside of that which ought to have borne testimony to Him, so that the honour, the power, and the glory shall redound to Christ and Christ alone. Man, as

man, failed in that which was committed to him, and then we see Christ, the true Man, set up in the purposes of God; Psalm 8. The declaration of God is, that there will be the entire setting aside of all that has borne the name, title, and authority of God in the earth.

Take power, for instance, which was ordained of God to be in the hands of man, and who was thus in a certain sense the representative of God; so that, as Christians, we ought to own the powers that be, and submit to them as “ordained of God.” “They were called gods unto whom the word of God came.” “But they shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.” Now when God judges among the gods, what does this shew? They have utterly failed—it is the immediate judgment of God which is executed. As to power then in the hands of man, the little stone, cut out without hands, smites the image of Gentile power, which becomes as chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind carries it away, and no more place is found for it. Christ then, according to the purpose of God, takes the full power of the kingdom.

Mark what patience God is exercising during the progress of evil denoted in this image of Daniel. There are three distinct characters of the abuse of power in Babylon, seen in the three successional steps of evil—idolatry, profaneness, and self-exalting apostasy. First, there was idolatry in Nebuchadnezzar setting up the statue of gold in the plains of Dura; setting up idolatry to have unity in a common religious influence. Secondly, profaneness in Belshazzar, who brings out the vessels of God’s captive temple. Thirdly, apostasy in Darius, who set himself up to be God. God has long patience with all this, till at last, when power is headed up in positive and

open rebellion against Christ, then God, rising up in the power of the stone cut without hands, dashes the whole thing to pieces, like a potter's vessel. Then the stone becomes a great mountain, filling the whole earth. Thus we see that the power that was at first given to man to be used for the glory of God, becoming corrupt in man's hand, is at the end used against God. And here Gentile power ceases in order to make way for Christ the great vessel of power and honour to God.

Take Israel under the law. Not only do they fail, fall on the stone and are broken, but the evil spirit of idolatry which had gone out of them, will take to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in subjects them to this perfection of wickedness, and their last state will be worse than the first. That is, they will go on ripening in evil, till at last, when they openly join in idolatry and apostate wickedness, God will give them up as a nation, though a remnant will be spared. There is the same failure in the house of David.

As regards the church of God, there is much more difficulty in believing that there will be the utter and final rejection of it, although of course it is only of the professing church that this will be true. It is a solemn truth, when evil comes in at the beginning, that it goes on increasing and ripening until judgment comes; and mark, also, that judgment is not executed upon it until it is fully ripe— "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." This principle is fully and plainly set forth in the parable of the tares. The tares were sown at the beginning, but were not to be rooted up at once. Both the tares and the wheat were to grow together until the harvest. Thus the Lord declares positively that the mischief came in at the beginning, and would go on

ripening till the execution of judgment. It is not a question of individuals, or whether the wheat will be all gathered into the garner (that of course it will be), but that the public testimony is spoiled. The crop was spoiled in the field; and that could not be remedied by man, for, looked at as a crop in the field, man is not competent to remedy it, for man is not competent to judge it. Besides, our business is grace and not the rooting up of tares.

Take 2 Thessalonians: the mystery of iniquity was working in the days of the apostles, but something hindered its full manifestation. And the very same iniquity is still working, even in this our day, “only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way”; but the evil will still continue working until open and apostate rebellion will terminate in the full execution of judgment.

Take the Book of Revelation. Without entering into the detail, there is a broad, plain evident testimony to what would be the end of the whole dispensation: “I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet,” chap. 16:13. Persons may discuss what these frogs may be, but one thing is quite clear, that they are some power of evil going forth to the kings of the earth to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, to fight against God. Thus things are ripening up to the fullest manifestation of evil; and when iniquity has arrived at the full, then a great voice from the throne will say, “It is done,” and judgment then immediately follows. We get something that comes more home to ourselves, although it is applied to the professing church directly.

Before the introduction of that perfect state of good connected with the power and reign of Christ, we see all the different threads of evil drawing together for one common judgment.

Man, in his character of open rebellion, setting up to be God Himself, must be judged.

Then Israel is in association with the apostate power, returning to idolatry, from which Abraham their father had been called out, identifying themselves with the apostate Gentiles, and saying, “We will have no king but Caesar.” Therefore, having by their sins sold themselves to Caesar, they must go back to Caesar again, and associate in evil with the Gentiles, and finally be judged with them, while an election inherits the blessing. As to the Jewish nation itself, we read in Isaiah 66 of its thorough departure— “eating swine’s flesh.”

Then there is the Babylonish corruption of Christianity; for the character of Babylon is that of idolatrous corruption, and it will be destroyed in the same way. All the evil will then be arrived at its height. The woman that rides the scarlet-coloured beast, the mother of harlots, the full results of Jezebel’s seduction; the beast, which is power; the false prophet; man in rebellion; Christianity in apostasy; the word of God set aside; the law departed from; grace despised: all these varied forms of evil are found drawing together and coalescing, and will be in the end the one common object of judgment (the evil being thus altogether set aside that there may be nothing left but good).

Is the professing church exempt from all this judgment? Certainly not. Although the wheat will all be safely gathered into the garner, yet, if we take the word of God

as our guide, we cannot for one moment suppose that the professing church can be exempt from this general judgment. Take Jude, who in writing to the saints, says, it was needful that he should exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to them; and why? Because “there are certain men crept in unawares; ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds.” But where were these false brethren found? In the church of God, as Jude says, “These are spots in your feasts of charity when they feast with you.” They were not found among the Jews, nor yet among the heathen, but in the church of God, corrupting it, “feeding themselves without fear.” God has most graciously allowed that there should be a distinct manifestation of every spring and form of evil that could ever possibly arise before the canon of Scripture was closed; that we might have the judgment of the written word of God on every evil as it arises. And without this we should not be able to detect the exceeding subtlety of the mystery of iniquity which is still working on, but, having the written word as our guide, as God’s children we are called on to judge everything by that alone. Again in 2 Timothy 3, “In the last days perilous timesshall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,” etc., their false piety being made manifest by being “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,” and also “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” And mark that it is not mere

Judaism that is meant here, although the spirit of Judaism be at work. And it is also added, “that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Then the apostle (having taken up the varied characteristics of those false brethren who “have crept in unawares,” which characteristics also serve as a guide to us) winds up the whole by saying to Timothy, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”; for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Thus we learn, in Paul’s instructions to Timothy, that the only sure and safe standing-place of the man of God, in this day of increasing iniquity, is the holy Scriptures; and that, in the plain godly use of them, as he and his mother and grandmother, pious women, had studied them—the very same holy Scriptures he had read from his youth. It is not authority or power (not even the power of the Spirit of God) that the saint can trust to for guidance, apart from the simple written word of God.

We learn, then, from these scriptures to which we have been referring, that the immediate occasion, object, and inner spring of all the terrible judgment which is coming, is the professing church itself. It ought to have been God’s witness on the earth, Christ’s epistle known and read of all men; but, having become corrupt, it is this professing church that primarily and definitely

brings down the wrath of God. Oh! beloved friends, there cannot be a more solemn subject than this, that not only will Israel and the beast fall under judgment, but, according to God's own word, the professing church will come under the same condemnation. I apply the word' church' here to Christendom, that which professes to bear the name of Christ. There is the same testimony in John's epistle, "Even now are there many Antichrists." I have no doubt but that the Antichrist will arise among the Jews, and he will be a full manifestation of that spirit of Antichrist which even now denies the Father and the Son, and also denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is indeed most fearful to think of that apostasy bearing a religious character as it does; that which characterises the many Antichrists is the denial of Christian truth, and though there will be a full apostasy, still it will be an apostasy from the doctrines of Christianity. How soon did the spirit of it come in! how very soon was there cause to say, that "all men seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ! "May the Lord graciously open the eyes of His saints, to see the tone and real character of these last evil days, and to remember, that though He has had long patience while He is gathering out souls for salvation, and in this sense to "account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation"—that His judgment, though delayed is not changed; for the word is gone forth out of His mouth, and the only remedy for the present evil is in judgment.

From the very beginning we see the principles of corruption coming in. The testimony for God failed. The tares were sown, thus the crop was spoiled in the field; the mystery of iniquity was working. In the address to Laodicea we find the Lord shewing the evil principles

which came in at the beginning producing the double character found in Laodicea. The object for which the seed had been sown in the field was spoiled. Instead of being witness for God, the church says, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” Thus we find there are two points of special importance as characterising this church of Laodicea—great pretension to spiritual riches in itself, and neither hot nor cold as regards Christ. First, there is great pretension to spiritual riches; but then as to life, they had the form of it, but not the power— “thou art neither cold nor hot.” It is not positive hatred to Christ, but it is not positive zeal for Christ. It is the church going on in outward comfort and worldliness, and at the same time making great pretensions to spiritual riches, which is a sure sign of poverty; for, whenever we see such great profession to possess within itself the riches of God, we shall be sure to find poverty. And why? Because those riches can only be found in Christ. When the church says, “I am rich and increased in goods [making itself the vessel of grace instead of Christ] and have need of nothing,” it boasts of riches within itself. Thus in so doing, it neither puts its “amen “to the promises of God in Christ Jesus, nor is it the true and faithful witness for God. The church ceases to be this, directly it looks away from Christ as the only source; and when it takes itself to be the vessel of riches, it then necessarily becomes a false witness instead of a true one. For the moment I say the church is all this or that, or the church is what I am looking at and not Christ, the eye is completely taken off Christ to the church; I am looking to it instead of to Him, however much I may pretend to honour Him. The faithfulness of God is not the question here, but our failure. This is of the last importance as guarding against deception.

In Philadelphia they were not possessing all that they were endowed with in Christ: they had but a little strength, and all that the Lord could say of them was, that they had kept His word, and had not denied His name. While there was felt poverty in the church, Christ was delighting in them, and could say, I am for you, and I am coming for you. “I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to know that I have loved thee.” But directly there is the pretension to riches in itself, when the church is taking riches and accrediting itself with them, instead of Christ’s delighting in it, there is an expression of positive disgust— “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” And if we look at the professing church at the present day, we shall see how it is getting into this state, rich in itself. When I find but very little strength, while the word is kept and His name not denied, then I can say, “Cheer up; the Lord is coming soon.” For acknowledging I am poor and have but little strength is not necessarily unbelief in Christ; it is not necessarily denying what we have in Him for our use, when we lean upon Him for strength because we have none. It is the body drawing the fulness from the Head. But when I find in a church this thought of fulness and riches in itself, then I say, You are going on towards Laodicea, whose end is to be spued out of Christ’s mouth. The church of Laodicea, having the thought of fulness and riches within herself, was perfectly ignorant of her state before God— “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.” Therefore, says the Lord, “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."

The church was not looking to the Lord for these, and, therefore, was wanting in every one of them. Gold is divine righteousness—the great contrast to human righteousness— and is that which characterises the standing and riches and foundation of the saints. "The white raiment" is the works of the saints, which are the fruits of believing in divine righteousness. They are consequent upon the possession of divine righteousness. Human righteousness is quite a distinct thing from the righteousness of saints; for the righteousness of saints flows from hearts set at liberty by divine righteousness. If we look at the Faquir in India, or the Dervish in Turkey, we find plenty of works, but never anything that is founded on redemption. The works of the Spirit flow out from the Spirit which has been the seal of divine righteousness to the soul; these saintly works are the fruits of the Holy Ghost in us. Here, then, is the "white raiment," which those at Laodicea were lacking. Therefore, they had not got even the righteousness of saints, for, being without divine righteousness, they could have no practical spiritual righteousness, no saintly works; as it is said that the "fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." They were also wanting in "eye-salve"; for they were as blind as nature could be to the things of God, and without spiritual discernment in anything, and yet they were saying, "We see": therefore their sin remained. Thus, having neither divine righteousness nor the consequent fruits of the Spirit, and still remaining in the blindness of nature, Laodicea wanted everything. There was abundance of pretension,

while all that was real before God was wanting, and all that was fictitious was there.

But the Lord does not yet give up all dealing with them; but here in Laodicea the Lord takes an outside character; for when the nominal church has got practically into a Jewish position, then the Lord takes His stand outside, and calls to individual souls that are within: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice.” The Lord desires to gain attention; He wants to be admitted. He warns the church of what is coming upon it—of positive judgment; but until that judgment is executed, He goes on necessarily in the exercise of His own blessed grace. But its objects are individual, for the church is given up. “If any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me”; he will have his portion at my table. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.”

Now, mark, this is apparently a great promise; but to me it seems the very least, as it is merely a place in the heavenly glory. They are told of no special association with Christ, such as we find in the promise to Pergamos, or even to the faithful in Sardis or in Thyatira. Nor is any thought of individual nearness, exclusively the portion of the bride, revealed as a motive. Reigning with Christ is merely the public display of reward and glory, which is a very different thing from the secret intimacy of the “hidden manna,” and the “white stone.” The knock was heard, and through grace obeyed; and they go up to heavenly glory. They have overcome, and, therefore, surely they must have their reward, “to sit with me on my throne.” These also have their part in the “first resurrection,” and, as such, they reign with Christ. But

as much might be said of the two witnesses. They went up, “and their enemies beheld them.” They sit on thrones; they have their reward, but the reward just amounts to the fact, that they have got their place in the glory. But there is not the same intimacy, there is not the special delight, there is not the Philadelphian joy of Christ having the church for the sake of herself, and the church having Christ for the sake of Himself. Still they get their place in the glory.

The solemn testimony of the Lord is, that the professing church is to be spued out of His mouth; and this ought to come home with more sorrow in our hearts than the judgment of the world, having a much more terrible character to the heart than the judgment of Antichrist himself, because it is something that disgusts Christ—that is nauseous to Him—from its having had a kind of outward connection with Himself. And hence the importance of this, if we think of that in the midst of which we are. And in speaking of the professing church in the day in which we live, I mean what is commonly called Christendom, bearing the name of Christ, but in works denying Him. We find Christ’s heart, thoughts, and nature, utterly rejecting that as disgusting which had been professing to be standing in connection with Himself.

There will be at the close much more connection between Judaism and nominal Christianity than people generally suppose. The lamb with two horns, the false prophet of Revelation, assuming the character of the Messiah, will play into the hands of the Roman emperor. From the very beginning the corruption in the church has had this double character, of idolatry, worshipping of angels, etc., and Judaism. Take the Colossians: “Beware

lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," or "judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days"; and again, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Then take the Galatians: by Jewish suggestion they were observing days, months, times, and years. The tendency has ever been to mix up Christianity with Judaism; and when Judaism is set aside by God, it is nothing better than heathenism. (See Galatians 4:8-10.) Carnal religion, the Gentilism of worshipping angels, philosophy and vain deceit, on the one hand, and the Judaism of keeping days, months, and years, on the other, had entered the church at the first, and were the occasion of Paul's warning against the going back to the beggarly elements, and that Jewish bondage from which they had been set free.

As he says, "After that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereby ye desire to be in bondage?" God had taken up the flesh in Israel, to prove that there was nothing good in it; He had allowed the Jew to follow the tendency of man's religion, in giving them the law, and ordinances, and sumptuous apparel, and gorgeous buildings, with the sound of trumpets and the like. But now Christ is come; and He is "the end of the law for righteousness," by which the Galatians were delivered from all their heathen ignorance and false gods. But then they go back, and, by embracing Judaism, they really got back again, as if still alive in flesh's life, in this world, into the old heathenism, the spirit of which is the religion of the flesh. As figures, God may have used these things to try man till the promised Seed was come. But now it has its

own character, as before in heathenism, without God in any way—the righteousness of the flesh, which will take up with anything which will give a form of fair covering. Therefore the tide of corruption which set in at the beginning—this turning back to beggarly elements—religiousness in the flesh, that will settle itself in ordinances, seeking anything but eye-salve—will go on increasing till the end, being all one principle; and thus coalesce with what is formally Judaism, and Judaism with it in a full idolatrous character. The deception of the present day is Judaism; it is that which is satisfied with anything which takes the form without the power of godliness.

It is that principle of Babylonish idolatry which will ultimately govern through the beast. The spirit of infidelity will accept anything but the claim of the truth; it will accept Judaism as such, and it will accept the Babylonish system as such. And the consequence will be, that the unbelieving Jews will be seduced by the Babylonish power, taking the form of Judaism in the East, while in the West it will be open Babylonish idolatry. And most solemn it is to think that this world, through which we are walking, is to be the scene of all these things. And however much the professing church may now be the pride and boast of man, at the end it will as such be spued out of Christ's mouth, with every pretension even to the full power of the Holy Ghost, but with nothing that gives Christ His value, but attributing all the value to itself, accrediting itself with it.

May the Lord keep us in the Philadelphian condition—it may be with but very little strength—yet keeping the word of His patience, and in the sensible enjoyment of perfect association with Himself, who has set before us

an open door, and will keep it open until He comes and takes us to Himself.

109 Delivered in London, 1852.

110 Morally, however, we are made partakers of the divine nature, that we may fully delight in God.

111 Indeed in Daniel, too, we see that the Son of man is Himself the Ancient of days. (See Daniel 7:22.)

112 Rather, “after these,” that is, after the things that are.

113 Note here, it has been supposed that this word is used in reference to the angel of the synagogue, and hence means the bishop or chief elder. But the angel of the synagogue was not the ruler of the synagogue at all; he was a reader, a kind of clerk. The ruler of the synagogue was quite another person. It may be that at the time the Apocalypse was written, the eldest or most eminent among the elders had a kind of precedence; but if it were even so in fact so as to render him responsible, the fact that he is called angel here is a proof, that if the responsibility was maintained, no such ecclesiastical title would be owned in Scripture by the Lord.

114 Note the character of Christ here. Perfect under the law Himself, He, by the unfailing patience of His grace, hearing all things, makes good the bringing of the voice of the shepherd to every sheep in the fold. Poor Elijah, devoted as he was, brings down fire on the disobedient, but does not reach the seven thousand that God knew. Christ refuses to bring down fire. He bears the judgment, while He kept the law, and at all cost made Jehovah’s voice reach the poorest, most guilty, most hidden of the flock. The consequence is—as indeed the

cause— the sheep of the flock are His, and all power of judgment is given to Him over all.

115 I have no doubt that the direct connection of chapter 5 is with verse 14 of chapter 4, verse 15 to the end of chapter 4 being a parenthesis.

116 Though such points are not my object here, I may remark (as much stress has been laid on it), in explanation, that the angel of the synagogue was in no way the ruler of the synagogue: they were rather the clerks of the synagogue. The angels may excel in strength, but are ministering spirits. The star is what gives the ideal of authority (though of subordinate authority) as a symbol, not the word “angel.”

117 But this I think in the activity of its ministrations.

118 Moses wrought them as a proof of his mission, as nothing was then divinely established in Israel. But this is not our subject here. It is the same principle. The Jewish prophets appealed to what was established.

119 Jezebel is the source of mischief within; Babylon corrupts the world; Laodicea is itself cast out as worthless.

Appendix

The preceding notes of lectures, whose object was the practical edification of the saints of God, leave room for expressing with more precision what I believe to be the successive states of the church, to which the moral condition unfolded in each of the church respectively applies.

The reader of the “Lectures” will remember, that he is not to expect in any case to find the active energy of the Spirit of God which produces the blessing of the church, but the form or condition of the professing church after that energy has been in operation and man’s responsibility comes into play. There may be a measure of blessing, or great culpability. But the energy of the Holy Ghost cannot be the object of judgment.

The first church indeed shews the decline of the saints from the first condition of blessing, produced by the power of the Holy Ghost. This sufficiently indicates the epoch to which it refers, while it characterises, in a general way, the result for the whole professing church, as a system established by God in this world, as a light in the world (and as such the church is considered here); not in its safety as the true living body of Christ, according to the power of redemption secured by the unfailing power of Christ.

It had left its first love. This was the point which marked that man had failed under the blessing of God. If the church as seen in the world, did not return to do its first works, it would be removed. This was already its state in apostolic days, immediately after its first planting; for such is man. Responsibility under the gift of the Holy

Ghost, failure, threat of removal if there was not a return to its first state—such is the word to Ephesus. She is called back to the work of the Holy Ghost, in practical result at the beginning. There was much that was yet good, among other things maintaining the bonds of natural relationship as moral ties, and the judgment of those pretending to authoritative teaching. But there was practical departure of heart from Christ.

This soon paved the way for putting the church into tribulation (for a limited time, however). The poor of the flock, the faithful ones, would be subject to injurious accusations from those professing to have established claims to be God's people, and persecution from without. This characterised the church. This state lasted from Nero to Diocletian.

After this, another state of things characterised the church. It had gone through persecution, and there had been faithful martyrs. The world, where its earthly dwelling was, had been its enemy. Now doctrines, or rather teaching, came in, which led it into association with the world—to commit fornication, and eat things sacrificed to idols; so, when he could not curse and destroy as an enemy, Balaam had not done with Israel; he counselled corruption as a friend. There were also doctrines that led to evil deeds, that sanctioned the breach of direct moral ties. Personal faithfulness was called from the midst of the evil. This went on from Constantine—was creeping in before, but now characterised the church, and continued to do so till it became an established system; and popery, as such, was the mother of children in the professing church.

Such is Thyatira. Jezebel is not simply a prophetess to seduce God's servants, as those who held the doctrine of Balaam; she is the mother of children. Those that associated with her would be in great tribulation—her children under utter judgment. Here already the call to hear is after separating the remnant. In the first three churches, it was still in connection with the whole body; and, further, all repenting and restoration of the body at large is dropped, and Christ's coming held out and the entire change of dispensation as the hope of the saints. This closes, I apprehend, the general prophetic history of the wliole body at large.

We have next protestantism (I do not say the Reformation, as a work of God's active power in the Holy Ghost, but), the great public result among men in professing Christendom. Christ is seen therefore afresh with all in His hand for the church. As to the church itself, it has a name to live, but is dead. It is not Jezebel producing children of corruption, and whoredom, and idolatry; but there is no answer to what has been received and heard. It would be visited as the world in judgment at Christ's coming. (Compare 1 Thess. 5.) It may be remarked that the general characteristic states go down to the end, as Ephesus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and, of course, Laodicea, though some may begin late.

But all was not to be left in this state. There was not to be restoration of strength. If I may so speak, the seven Spirits and seven stars were useless in Christ's hand, if it was not to condemn. But there would be a company true to Christ, keeping His word, not denying His name, having only-a little strength, but the door open before it. Christ's character, not His power, is put forward; and

consistency, obedience, dependence, and owning Christ, are marked by the Holy Ghost as characterising those whom Christ would shew He had loved. They were comforted with the thought that He was coming quickly.

The result remained, apart from these despised ones—the result to the general professing body. It was not Jezebel-corruption, but lukewarmness, having a high idea of what it had, but without divine righteousness, without spiritual discernment, without the fruits of a spiritual character. It was spued out of Christ's mouth. Such was the end of the professing world as distinct from Jezebel. Thus the whole characteristic history of the professing church is given from the apostles' days, till it is utterly rejected, or judged by the judgment of God: a warning given already to Ephesus, but executed, after marvellous patience, in Jezebel and Laodicea, Christ then, as in His title in the address to Laodicea, taking the place of witness, which the church had not been able to maintain. The Lord give us now a true Philadelphian character.

The Hopes Of The Church Of God,

In Connection With The Destiny Of The Jews

And The Nations As Revealed In Prophecy175

Lecture 1 Read 2 Peter I. Introduction

It should be the endeavour of the Christian, not only to be assured of his salvation in Christ, but also of all the results of this salvation. He should not only know that he is in his Father's house, but enjoy the privileges of his happy position. "God has called us by glory and by virtue," 2 Peter 1:3.

In the glory of Christ and of the church, God has given us a futurity full of His own designs, the present study of which fills our hearts full of associations with Him; and this assuredly is one of His objects in dispensing prophecy to us; He reveals it to us as His friends (John 15:15; Eph. 1:9), making us participators of the thoughts which occupy Himself. He could not give us a more tender pledge of His love and confidence (Gen. 18:17), nor anything having a holier tendency as regards ourselves. In fact, if men are to be known by the ends they are pursuing, our conduct in the present life will have the impress and bearing of that futurity which we are expecting; our life here will be coloured by the foretaste of things there. Those whose ambition is dignity and power, those who dream only of riches, those who have no other aim than the pleasures of this world, act according to that which is in their heart; their habits bear the mark of what they are longing for. So it is in the church. If the faithful understood their calling, which is no less than participation in a coming heavenly

glory, what would be the consequence? Nothing less than to live here as strangers and pilgrims. In distinguishing the prophecies which relate to this earth, they would better understand the nature of the earthly promises made to the Jews, and would learn to separate them from those which refer to us Gentiles; they would judge the spirit of the age, and would preserve their hearts from being engrossed by human objects, and from many a care and distraction hurtful to the life of a Christian: they would exercise a happy dependence upon Him who has ordered all things, and who “knows the end from the beginning,” and would yield themselves entirely to that hope which has been given them, and to the discharge of those duties which flow from it.

It has been said, that the real use to be made of the prophecies is, to shew the divinity of the Bible by those which have already been accomplished. This is certainly a use which may be made of them, but this is not the special object for which they have been given. They belong not to the world, but to the church or remnant, to communicate the intentions of God to that church or remnant, and to be its guide and torch before the arrival of those events which they predict, or during their accomplishment. Shall we use the revelations of God merely as the means of convincing us afterwards that He has told the truth? It is as if someone were treating me as his intimate friend, heaping benefits upon me, communicating his thoughts to me, telling me all that he knew would shortly happen; and I should use all his confidence for no other purpose than to convince myself, when everything had come to pass, that he was a truth-telling person.176 Alas! alas! where are we? Have we so

far lost the feeling of our privileges, and of the goodness of our God? Is there, then, nothing for the church in all these holy revelations? for certainly it is not the church's place to be discussing whether God, its divine Friend, has told the truth. Dear friends, we wrong the goodness and friendship of God in acting thus towards Him. As Christians, we have no need to be witnesses of an event, in order to believe what God says to be true—that His word is true. You believe already that prophecy is the word of God.

But more than this. The greater part of the prophecies, and, in a certain sense, we may say, all the prophecies, will have their accomplishment at the expiration of the dispensation in which we are. Now, at that epoch it will be too late to be convinced of their truth, or to employ them for the conviction of others; the terrible judgment which will come upon those who disbelieve them, will be sufficient demonstration of their truth. No; they are given to us to direct us in our present walk in the ways of the Lord, and to be our comfort in enabling us to see that it is God who disposes of all events, and not man. They are as a light shining in a dark place. Thus, the passions, instead of being let loose in the world of politics, are quieted. I observe what God has said—I read in Daniel that all is ordered from the beginning, and I am tranquil. Altogether separated from these worldly things, I can study beforehand the profound and perfect wisdom of God; I get enlightened, and cleave to Him instead of following my own understanding. I see in the events which take place around me the unfolding of the purpose of the most High, and not a field abandoned to the struggle of human passions. Thus, and specially in the events which come to pass at the end, it is, that

prophecy opens out to us the character of God—all that God would have us know of Himself—His faithfulness, His justice, His power, His longsuffering, but at the same time the judgment which He will certainly execute on proud iniquity, the public and fearful vengeance which He will take on those who corrupt the earth—in order that His government may be established in peace and blessing for all.

Where was the use of the Lord forewarning the disciples that they were to flee under such and such circumstances, if they did not understand what He was speaking about, and did not believe beforehand in the truth of His word? It was precisely this knowledge and this faith that distinguished them from all their unbelieving countrymen. It is just so with the church.

The judgment of God is to come upon the nations; the church is informed of this; and, thanks to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, understands it, believes it, and escapes the things which are coming.

But, says another objector, these prophetic studies are merely speculative. Oh! what a device of Satan is this! If looking beyond the present, beyond the feeling of my own wants, if passing beyond the domain of material being, I launch into futurity—everything will be vague and uninfluential, unless I fill it—with my own thoughts; now these are real speculations; or with the thoughts of God; what are these? It is prophecy which reveals and develops them; for prophecy is the revelation of the thoughts and counsels of God as to things to come. Where is the man bearing the name of Christian, who does not rejoice in the prospect that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the

sea”? This is a prophecy. If it be asked, How is this to be accomplished? it is not from man’s mouth that the answer is to come: the word of the same prophecy will tell us, and thus silence the imaginations and the vainglory of our proud hearts.

In truth, although communion with God comforts and sanctifies us, and this communion, which is to be eternal, is already given to us, yet He wishes to act upon our hearts by positive hopes. Necessarily then He must communicate the subject of them to us, in order that they may have an efficacious influence, and so prevent these hopes being either vague, or the result of ingeniously contrived fables. Thanks be to the God of all grace and goodness, our futurity is neither the one nor the other. The fulness of the details of the coming glory are still the subject of prophecy. “For,” says the apostle, when he wants to call forth the exercise of piety, virtue, brotherly love, and charity in the souls of the faithful, and would have them keep these things constantly in remembrance (2 Pet. 1:16-21), “we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also177 a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in

old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

In going through the more general features of prophecy, we shall examine these three great subjects: the church; the nations; and the Jews.

In pursuing this study, we shall find, according to the measure of light which is given to us, a very beautiful result, namely, a full development of the perfections of God under two names or characters, according to which He has revealed Himself in relationship to man. To the Jews, it is as Jehovah that He makes Himself known (Exodus 6:3); to the church, it is as Father. In a word, as that which is predicted by the mouth of the prophets as to the Jews gives us the character of Jehovah—His faithfulness and all His attributes; so that which is prophesied concerning the church opens out to us the name of Father. The church is in relationship with the Father, and the Jews with Jehovah, which is the characteristic name of their relationship with God. Jesus, in consequence, is presented to the Jews as the Messiah, the centre of the promises and of the blessings of Jehovah to that nation; to the church He appears as the Son of God, gathering to Himself His "many brethren," sharing with us His title and privileges, those, namely, of "children of God," members of His "family," "joint-heirs with Christ, the firstborn among many brethren," who is the expression of all the glory of His Father.

In the dispensation of the fulness of times, when God will gather together all things in Christ, then will be also realised in its fullest sense the name in which He revealed Himself to Abraham, the father of the faithful:

that name under which He has been celebrated by Melchisedec (a type of the royal Priest, who will be the centre as well as the assurance of the common blessing of the united earth and heavens), the name of “the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”

Lecture 2 Read Ephesians 1. The Church And Its Glory

Of the three objects which have been mentioned in the first lecture as about to form the subject of our study, that of the church and its glory is to have the first place. It introduces us to the name of Father, the character in which God has revealed Himself to us, and whence flow to the church, the fruits of grace, and all the circumstances of its state of glory, as everything flowed to Israel from the name of Jehovah. To this name of Father, however, is to be added another relationship, distinctly marked in the epistle to the Ephesians, and closely allied to the principal one, namely, that the Father has given the church to Christ as His bride, so that it will fully participate in all His glory. In adopting us for His children, the Father has associated us with the dignities and glory of the Son, “firstborn among many brethren,” Rom. 8:29. As the bride of Jesus, we enjoy, in virtue of His incomparable love to us, all the privileges that belong to Him. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand,” John 3:35. This is the first great truth we desire to set out from. And as the Son has glorified the Father, so the Father will glorify the Son.

Our second point is: we shall participate in the glory of the Son; as it is said in John 17:22, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them”; and it is in order

that the world may know that the Father loves us as He loves Jesus Himself. In seeing us in the same glory, the world will be convinced that we are the objects of the same love; and the glory which we shall have at the last day will be but the manifestation of this precious and astonishing truth.

Thus the hope of the church is not alone salvation, that is, to escape the wrath of God, but to have the glory of the Son Himself. That in which the perfection of its joy consists is the being loved by the Father, and by Jesus; and, in consequence of this love, the being glorified. But more than this, the Father would have us enter into the full intelligence of these riches, and has even given us the firstfruits by the presence of the Holy Ghost in all those who are saved. Before we follow up these thoughts by other testimonies from the word of God, let us look into the chapter before us.

In the very first lines, God presents Himself as a Father, and in the relationships already indicated. He is “our Father” (v. 2), and “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3). From this until verse 8 the apostle expounds salvation. God “has made us accepted in the beloved” —this “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” in God’s presence, in conformity to His nature, and adopted as children to the Father. We have redemption through Christ’s blood. This is according to the riches of God’s grace.

From verses 8 to 10, we see that this grace of salvation introduces us by its actual power, by the Holy Spirit, into the knowledge of the proposed purpose or decree of God as to the glory of Christ; a touching proof, as we have before remarked, of the love of God, who treats us as

His friends, and tranquillises our souls, in an ineffable manner, in making us see the termination of all the efforts and all the agitation of the men of this world. The decreed purpose of God is this, God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.”

Until verse 8, we have seen our predestination to the state of children of the Father, and the actual accomplishment of salvation. “We have redemption through his blood.” In that which follows, we have the purpose of God, as to the glory of Christ, in relation with all things; afterwards, from verse 11, our participation, yet future, in the glory thus designated; and, further, the sealing of the Holy Spirit whilst we are waiting in expectation of this glory. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance … that we should be to the praise of his glory.” Previous to verse 8, it had been “to the praise of the glory of his grace.” Now it is “to the praise of his glory”; and then, “after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” The remainder of the chapter is a prayer of the apostle, that the faithful may understand their hope, and that the power of the resurrection and of the exaltation of Christ, to whom the church is united, may be accomplished in them, a power which works towards them as believers.

This position of the church, which enjoys its own redemption, and which waits for the redemption of the inheritance, has its perfect type in Israel. This people, redeemed from Egypt, did not enter at once into Canaan, but into the wilderness, whilst the land itself remained still in the posesssion of the Canaanites. The

redemption of Israel was finished, the redemption of the inheritance was not. The heirs were redeemed, but the inheritance was not yet delivered out of the hands of the enemy. “Now all these things,” says the apostle (1 Cor. 10:11), “happened unto them” [the Israelites] “for types, and they are written for our admonition” [the church], “upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

Christ is waiting for the resurrection of the church, in order that everything may be subjected to Him, subjected not of right only, but in fact. He is waiting for that solemn moment when Jehovah will make all His enemies as a footstool under His feet; Psalm 110:1. Until that moment arrives, kept as a secret in the depth of the divine counsels,178 He is sitting on the “right hand of the majesty on high,” Heb. 1:3.

Christ will take the inheritance of all things as a man, in order that the church, bought with His blood, may inherit all things with Him, purified co-heir of an inheritance which will be itself purified.

Let us keep in mind, then, these two fundamental points: — Firstly, Christ, in the counsels of God, possesseth all things. Secondly, In virtue of being the bride of Christ, the church participates in all that He has, and in all that He is, except His eternal divinity, although in a sense we do participate in the divine nature.

Let us look through the passages which furnish the thoughts we have been giving out. All things, we say, are for Christ. “He is appointed heir of all things,” Heb. 1:2. They belong to Him of right, because He is their Creator; Col. 1:15-18. Observe, in this passage, two headships of Christ; first of all He is called “firstborn [or, chief] of every creature,” then, “firstborn from the

dead," "the head of the body, the church"; a distinction which throws much light on our subject. "All things were created by him, and for him." Moreover, He will possess them as man, as last Adam, to whom God has intended in His counsels to subject them.

It is thus that we read in Psalm 8, which is applied to Christ by Paul (Heb. 2:6), and is, in fact, the corner stone of the doctrine of the apostle upon this subject. He cites the psalm three times in his epistles, in passages, the leading thoughts of which are the subjection of all things to the Man Christ under three different aspects, every one of which is important for us.

According to Hebrews 2:6, the prophecy is not yet accomplished, but the church has, in the partial accomplishment of that which is yet to come, the pledge of its final consummation. All things are not yet put in subjection to Jesus; but, in the meantime, Jesus is already crowned with glory and honour— certain proof that what remains will have its fulfilment in due time.

Under the present dispensation (the object of which is the gathering together of the co-heirs) all things are not subjected to Him; but He is glorified, and His followers acknowledge His rights. In Hebrews 2, then, we have the application of Psalm 8:5, 6, and we are informed that the subjection of all things to the last Adam has not yet taken place.

In Ephesians 1:20, 23, we equally see Jesus exalted, highly exalted, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and the putting of all things under His feet is also offered to our attention; but as the effect of this is the introduction of the church into the same glory, Jesus is presented to us, in this glory, as the Head of the church,

His body, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all”—the other truth upon which we have been insisting.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 15, this same fact, the glorification of Jesus, and the subjection of all things to Him, is shewn to us, but still in another point of view, that is, as about to take place at the resurrection, according to the power of which Jesus has been declared the last Adam, and withal head of a kingdom which He will possess as Man, and which He will eventually deliver up to God the Father, whilst He Himself, as last Adam, is to be “subject unto him that put all things under him,” instead of reigning as Man, as He had been doing, over all things—all things, we say, except over Him who will have subjected them to Him.

The truth, then, which we have presented, besides the proper joy of being with Him and like Him and in the Father’s presence, is, a subjection yet to come of all things to Christ, a reign which He will share with the church, inasmuch as this is His body, and which will take place therefore at the resurrection of this same body, and a power which He will afterwards resign to God the Father, at some decreed time, in order that God may be all in all. Christ, glorified in His Person now, and whilst the church is gathering, is sitting upon the throne of God, waiting until it be complete; until, in short, the time be come for His being invested with His royal power, and that Jehovah shall have put His enemies as a footstool under His feet.

An important distinction results from the passages we have been citing: it is this, that besides the reconciliation of the church, there is the reconciliation of all things. You may have perceived this in the chapter,

with the reading of which the lecture began: we saw that the proposed intention of God was to gather together all things in Christ; that the reconciliation of the church is represented, in the verses which precede verse 8, as a thing accomplished, and the glory as a thing future, of which we have as yet but the earnest in the presence of the Holy Spirit in us after having believed. But we see in Romans 8:19-23 that the deliverance of creation will take place at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God. As to the present, that is, the time during which Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, everything is in a state of misery, the whole creation remains in the bondage of corruption. It is true that we are redeemed, and that even the price for the redemption of creation has been given; and more than this, we have received the firstfruits of the Spirit as earnest of the glory. But all this is but our expecting state, until the Most High enters upon the exercise of His power, until He reigns, and becomes possessor in fact, as He is by right, of the heavens and the earth. Inhabiting in our bodies a fallen creation, whilst indeed by the Spirit we are united to Christ, we have, on the one hand, the assurance of being children “accepted in the beloved,” and the joy of the hope of the inheritance by the Spirit which is the earnest of it; but, upon the other hand, by the same Spirit, we give utterance, inasmuch as we are in the body, to the sighs and groanings of the creation, being participators therein owing to this body of death. All is in disorder; but we know Him who has redeemed us and made us heirs of all things, and who has introduced us into the enjoyment of the love of the Father: we enjoy these privileges; but, understanding also the blessings which will be shed upon the inheritance, when Christ shall take it and we

shall appear with Him in glory, perceiving likewise the miserable state in which the scene of His future dominion actually is, we serve, by the Spirit, as a channel to those sighs which go up to the throne of the God of mercy.

The passage already cited from the epistle to the Colossians accurately establishes this distinction. It is said (v. 20), “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you … (the saints) now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death.” The church is already reconciled. The things of earth and heaven will be reconciled later, by the efficacy of His blood already shed.179 The order of the ceremonies on the great day of atonement explained this reconciliation typically, though in special reference, as to details, to the part which the Jews will have in these blessings.

In Colossians 1:16, we clearly see what are the things which are comprehended in this reconciliation: “All things were created by him, and for him.” All that He has created as God, He will inherit as the restorer of all things. Were there, for example, a blade of grass that was not subjected to His power in blessing, Satan would have got an advantage over Christ, over His rights, and over His inheritance. Now it is the judgment which will vindicate all the righteous title of Christ.

Besides all this, Christ, when He comes, will be the source of joy to all created intelligences, joy reflected and elevated by the blessing which will be spread over the whole creation; for the joy of witnessing the happiness of others, and also that which flows down in

the freeing of creation from the servitude of corruption, is a divine part of our enjoyments; we partake of it with the God of all goodness.

As to us, it is in the “heavenly places “that we shall find our abode. The spiritual blessings in heavenly places which we enjoy even now in hope, though hindered in many ways, will be for us, in that day, things natural to our physical and normal state, so to speak; but the earth will not fail to feel the effects of it. “Wicked spirits in heavenly places” (see margin, Eph. 6:12), whose place will be then filled by Christ and His church, will cease to be the continual and prolific causes of the misery of a world subjected to their power by sin. The church, on the contrary, with Christ, reflecting the glory in which she participates, and enjoying the presence of Him who is at once to her its source and fulness, will beam upon the earth in blessing; and the nations will walk by her light—“help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18) in His glory, full of thoughts of her beloved, and enjoying His love, she will be the worthy and happy instrument of His blessings; whilst, in her condition, she will be the living demonstration of their success. For God has done these things, “that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus,” Eph. 2:7. The earth will enjoy the fruits of the victory and of the faithfulness of the last Adam, and will be the magnificent testimony of it in the sight of principalities and powers, as it is at present, in the chaos made by sin, of the ruin and of the iniquity of the first Adam. Without doubt, the crowning joy—the joy of joys—will be the communion of the Father and of the Bridegroom; but to be witness of His goodness, to have part in it, and to be an instrument of it towards a fallen

world, will certainly be to taste of divine joys, for ‘God is love.”

It is this earth that we inhabit that God has taken to make the scene for the manifestation of His character and His works of grace. This earth is the place where sin has entered and fixed its residence; it is here that Satan has displayed his energy for evil; it is here that the Son of God has been in humiliation, has died, and has risen; it is upon this earth that sin and grace have both done their wonders; it is upon this earth that sin has abounded, yet, notwithstanding, grace has much more abounded. If now Christ is hid in the heavens, it is upon this earth He will be revealed; it is here that the angels have best penetrated the depths of the love of God; it is here, also, that they will comprehend its results, manifested in glory; upon this earth, where the Son of man has been in humiliation, the Son of man shall be glorified. If this earth in itself is but a small thing, that which God has done upon it, and will do, is not a small thing for Him. For us (the church), the heavenly places are the city of our habitation, for we are co-heirs, not the inheritance), we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; but the inheritance is necessary for the glory of Christ, as the co-heirs are the object of His most tender love, His brethren, His bride.

I have, then, detailed to you, dear friends, briefly and feebly, as I am well aware, what is the destiny of the church. The Spirit can alone make us feel all the sweetness of the communion of the love of God, and the excellence of the glory which is given to us. But, at least, I have pointed out passages enough in the word to make you understand—with the help of the Holy Spirit, which I implore for you all—the thoughts which I had on my

heart to tell you to-night. It results clearly enough that we live under the dispensation during which the heirs are gathered together, and that there is another which will take its place at the coming of the Saviour,—that in which the heirs shall have the enjoyment of the inheritance of all things,— that in which all things shall be subjected to Christ, and to His church, as united to Him and manifested with Him. What is to follow that is not our business now: I mean that last period, when God will be all in all, and when Christ Himself, as Man, will be subject to God; and chief, as Man, of a family eternally blessed in the communion of God, who has loved that family, and whose tabernacle will be in the midst of it— God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternally blessed. Amen. It is in occupying herself with these subjects, full of hope by the Spirit, that the church will be detached from the world, and will clothe herself with the character which becomes her as the affianced bride of Christ, to whom she owes all her heart and all her thoughts.

Lecture 3 Read Acts 1. The Second Coming Of Christ.

This evening I am going to speak of the coming of Christ. Many questions link themselves with this great one, as for instance, the reign of Antichrist. But I shall limit myself this evening to the event itself—namely, the coming of the Lord. Recruits I began by reading Acts 1 because the promise of the Lord’s return is there set forth as the alone hope of the church, as the first object which would of necessity fix the attention of the disciples, when they were vainly following with their eyes the ascending Saviour, who was going to be hidden

in God. In this chapter, just as the Lord was about to leave them, three remarkable features appear. The first is, that the disciples desired to know when and how God would restore the kingdom of Israel. Now Jesus did not say that this was never to happen; He only said, that the time of this restoration is not revealed. It belonged to times and seasons which the Father has put in His own power. The second is, that the Holy Ghost was about to come; and the third, that during the time the disciples were looking towards heaven, two angels said to them, “Why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

They were, then, to expect the return of Christ.

If we study the history of the church, we shall find it to have declined in spirituality exactly in proportion as this doctrine of the expectation of the Saviour’s return had been lost sight of. In forgetting this truth it has become weak and worldly. Not, however, wishing to quit the sphere of the word, let us see therein how the feeling of the return of Christ ruled the intelligence, sustained the hope, inspired the conduct, of the apostles. We have only to this end to look through a few passages of the New Testament.

Acts 3:19-21. “Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come [or “so that the times of refreshing may come”] from the presence of the Lord… ” The Holy Spirit is come; He has remained with the church; but the times of refreshing will come “from the presence of the Lord when he shall send Jesus.” It is impossible to apply

this passage to the Holy Ghost, because He was already, at that time, come down, and had said by the mouth of the apostle, “Whom the heaven must receive till the times of restitution of all things.” And, in truth, the Holy Spirit has not restored all things. He who is to come, according to this passage, is not to come to judge the dead, nor that the world may be burnt up and destroyed; but it is specially for ‘the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets.”

I cite these passages to make you comprehend what I understand by the coming of the Saviour. It is not the judgment of the dead; it is not the great white throne; but it is the return of Jesus Christ in Person, when He shall be sent from heaven. If you compare these verses with what is written in Revelation 20 you will see that the coming of Jesus Christ, and the judgment of the dead, are two distinct events; that when the judgment of the dead takes place, there is not a word about Christ returning from heaven upon the earth; for it is said, “From whose face the earth and the heavens fled away,” v. u.

The Lord will return to the earth.

Let us now see how Himself first, then the Holy Ghost by the apostles, have constantly directed our attention to His personal return.

Matthew 24:27-33. “Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” Certainly the expedition of Titus against Jerusalem was not the coming of the Saviour in the clouds of heaven. Neither is this a description of the judgment of the dead before the tribunal of the great white throne. At that time the earth

is no more, whilst in the passage just cited the nations of the earth are brought before us, and it is a question of an event in which the earth is concerned. “Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” It is not a millennium brought about by the exercise of the power of the Holy Ghost. The world has never seen the Holy Ghost. We are told that the tribes of the earth shall lament when they see the Lord Jesus (v. 33). “So likewise ye, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”

Verses 42-51. The faithfulness of the church is made to hinge on its watchfulness as regards this truth of the return of Christ. From the moment that it was said, “My lord delayeth his coming,” “then the servant began to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.” “Therefore be ye also ready,” said Jesus, “for the Son of man [not death] cometh.”

Matthew 25:1-13. The expectation of the return of Christ is the exact measure (the thermometer, so to speak) of the life of the church. As the servant became unfaithful the moment he had said, “My lord delayeth his coming,” so it was with the ten virgins, for it is said, they all slept. It was not death, nor the Holy Spirit, that the ten virgins were told to expect; for neither death nor the Holy Spirit is the Bridegroom. All the virgins were found in the same state; the wise ones (the true saints) as well as the foolish ones, who wanted the oil of the Holy Spirit, slept and forgot the immediate return of Christ, as, on the other hand, what wakes them up is the midnight cry that He is coming.

In Mark 13 we get nearly the same thing. Verse 26 forbids us to apply the passage to the invasion of the Romans;180 and when it is said (v. 22), “It is nigh, even

at the doors," there is no thought about the judgment of the dead, nor of the great white throne. At that day, the day of the judgment before the great white throne, there will be no question either of house or household.

Four passages only are to be found in the New Testament which speak of the joy of the departed soul. The first occasion is when the thief said to the Lord (Luke 23:42, 43), "Remember me when thou comest into [in] thy kingdom." It was about the coming of Jesus in glory that his thoughts were occupied—a truth which was familiar to the Jews. The Lord replied to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The second case is that of Stephen, who said (Acts 7:59), "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; the third, when Paul said, "To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8); the fourth, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. 1:22, 23. In truth, it is far better to expect the glory, present with Christ, than to remain here below: not that we go to glory when we depart, but we are quit of sin, out of the reach of it, and we enjoy the Lord apart from it. Yes, it is a state far better, but it is also one of expectation, like that in which Christ is Himself placed, sitting at the right hand of the Father, expecting that which is to come.

Luke 12:32. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." Here we find again (circumstantially different) the parable of the unfaithful servant; only the Lord adds, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself [what a picture of Christendom!] shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not [the pagans], … shall be beaten with few stripes." All shall be judged; but Christendom is in a state worse

than that of the Jews or pagans, inasmuch as it has had more advantages.

Luke 17:30. “Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

Luke 21:27. “Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” The fig-tree of which the Saviour speaks on this occasion, is especially the symbol of the Jewish nation. “Watch therefore,” He adds, “that ye may stand before the Son of man.” These two chapters, namely, Luke 17 and 21, as well as Matthew 24 and Mark 13, relate to the coming of the Lord connected with the Jews— its earthly bearing. To these may be added Luke 19, where the servants who are called, and the enemies who rejected the nobleman, clearly mark the servants of Christ, and the Jewish nation. See particularly verses 12, 13, 27.

John 14:2. “In my Father’s house are many mansions… And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself.” The Lord Himself will come for His church, in order that the church may be there, where He is.

Acts 1:11. “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner.”

Acts 3. This is the preaching of the apostle to the Jews: Repent, and Jesus will return. You have killed the Prince of life; you have denied the Holy One and the Just; God has raised Him from the dead. Repent, be converted, and He will return. But they would not repent. During three years He had vainly sought fruit from His fig-tree. The husbandmen, on the contrary, killed the Son of Him who had placed them in His vineyard. The Son of God, Jesus, asked pardon for them on the cross, whence His

voice is all-powerful, in saying, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the apostle, answers to the intercession of Jesus, “I wot that through ignorance ye did it.… Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” But we know they continued to resist the Holy Ghost; Acts 7:51.

Acts 3:20, 21. “And he shall send Jesus Christ… whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

This is the great end of all the counsels of God. As we have before seen the secret of His will, that God would gather together all things in Christ, we find here what He has spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets: that is, the earthly part. How are all these things to be accomplished? Is it by the operation of the Holy Spirit? No, for it is said that “he shall send Jesus.” It is, doubtless, true that the Holy Ghost will be shed abroad, and He will be so specially upon the Jews; but in the passage quoted the event is to take place by the presence of Jesus. There cannot be a revelation more explicit, than that it is by the sending of Jesus, that the things spoken of by the prophets will receive their accomplishment. How can the force and simplicity of this declaration be evaded?

We see the fall, the ruin, of man; we see even all creation subjected to corruption. The bride desires that the Bridegroom may appear. It is not the Holy Spirit who will re-establish the creation, and who is the inheritor of all things; it is Jesus. When Jesus appears in His glory,

the world will behold Him, whilst it cannot see the Holy Ghost.

“At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.” The work of the Holy Spirit is not to re-establish all things here below, but to announce Jesus who will return. Again, it is the Holy Spirit who was in Peter, when he said, “Whom the heavens must receive till the time of the restitution.” Receive whom? Not the Holy Ghost (He was descended from heaven already), but Jesus; and all we have to do is to believe.

Let us now turn to the epistles, in order to be shewn that the coming of the Lord is the constant and living expectation of the church. We see, on referring to Romans 8:19-22, all creation in suspense until the moment of His appearing. Compare John 14:1, 3; Col. 3:1-4. Again (1 Cor. 1:7), “Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ”; and Ephesians 1:10, on which we have already spoken. Since at the last judgment the earth and the heavens will have passed away, it is before this time that God will gather together in one all things in Christ.

Philippians 3:20, 21. “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

Colossians 3:4. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

The two epistles to the Thessalonians turn entirely on this subject. Everything in the first epistle has reference to the coming of Christ; all that Paul says of his work, or of his joy, belongs to it.

First of all, conversion itself is made to bear upon it (chap. 1:10). The faithful of Thessalonica, who had served as models to those of Macedonia and Achaia, and whose faith was so spread abroad that the apostle had no need to say anything, “had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” It is remarkable that this church, one of the most flourishing of those to which the apostles have written, should be precisely that one to which the Lord has chosen to reveal, with most detail, the circumstances of His coming. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.”

Such was the faith of the Thessalonians, that it was spoken of in all the world. What was it? That they expected the Lord from heaven. And it is for us to have this same faith which the Thessalonians had. We ought, like them, to be expecting the Lord before the thousand years. They were certainly not saying there must be a period of a thousand years ere the Saviour comes (chap. 2:19). “For what is our hope? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

Chapter 3:13. “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” It is evidendy the ruling idea influencing the mind of the apostle.

Chapter 4:13-18. It is remarkable that the consolation which he gives to those who surrounded the death-bed of a Christian, is their friend’s return with Jesus, and their mutual meeting. It is customary to say, “Be content: he is gone to glory.” This was not the way with

the apostle. The comfort which he proposes to those who are mourning the death of a believer is, “Be content: God will bring them back.” What a change must not the habitual feelings of Christians have undergone, since the consoladon given by an apostle is counted in this day as foolishness! The believers in Thessalonica were penetrated to such a degree with the hope of the return of Christ, that they did not think of dying before that event; and when one of them departed, his friends were afflicted with the fear that he would not be present at that happy moment. Paul reassures them by asserting that “those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” We can understand by this example to what a degree the church has put away the hope which occupied the souls of the first converts; how far distant we are from the apostolic views, which we have replaced by the idea of an intermediate state of happiness (the soul separated from the body),—a condition true, indeed, and by much superior to ours on the earth, but vague, and which at best is a state of waiting. Jesus Himself waits, and the dead saints wait.

I by no means desire to weaken the truth of this intermediate state of happiness. Thus the apostle speaks of it in 2 Corinthians 5, “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not that for we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life…” After declaring that his hope was in the power of the life of Christ, and that mortality should be swallowed up by it, he adds, “Therefore we are always confident; knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” etc. That is, if this mortal body is not absorbed in life (is not changed without seeing death), the

confidence which I have is not interrupted at death; I have already received the life of Christ in my soul—that cannot fail. It may be that I shall depart, but the life in my soul will not be affected. I have already the life of Christ: if I depart, I shall be with Him.

One more remark on 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17: “We which are alive [those who shall be alive on the earth at the coming of the Lord] shall not prevent them which are asleep.” “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive (those who remain) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

If the apostle had expected a millennium of the Holy Spirit before the coming of Jesus, how could he ever have said, “We who remain until the coming of Christ”? There was, then, in his soul, a continual expectation of the coming of Christ, of which he knew not the moment, but which he had a right to expect. Was he deceived in that? No, not at all: he was always expecting; his business was to do so; and waiting had this of good in it, that it kept him completely detached from the world. If we were expecting from day to day the coming of the Lord, where would all those plans be as to family, house, etc., to flatter the pride of life and to get rich? It is the nature of the hope which we have that forms our character; and when the Lord comes, Paul will enjoy the fruits of his waiting. The hope which animated him produced its good fruits; it was in the spirit of this hope that he exclaimed, “And I pray God your whole spirit and

soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. 5:23.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4. Mark well that this day ought not to overtake the followers of Christ as a thief.

2 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 2:3-12. Instead of a world blessed with a millennium without the presence of Jesus, behold the man of sin growing worse, until he is destroyed by the glorious appearing of Christ—evidence to us that a mere spiritual millennium alone is untrue. For the mystery of iniquity, which was already working in the time of Paul, was to go on until the man of sin was manifested, who will be destroyed by the glorious appearing of Christ Himself, with the Spirit of His mouth. Now, in such a state of things where is the place for such a millennium?181 1 Timothy 6:14-16. "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

2 Timothy 4:1.182 "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,* who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom."

Titus 2:11-13. The grace of God has appeared, teaching us first how to live, and, secondly the expectation of glory. The appearing of grace is already come, it teaches us to expect the appearing of glory.

Hebrews 9:28. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without "sin unto salvation." As

the great High Priest, when He shall have finished His work of intercession, He will go out of the sanctuary; Lev. 9:22-24.

James 5:9. “Behold the judge standeth before the door.”

2 Peter 1:16-21. “For we have not followed cunningly. devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

The transfiguration was, then, a specimen—a kind of pattern —of the coming of the Lord in glory.

1 John 3:2, 3. “But we know that when he [the Son of God] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” We shall only be like Him when He appears, not before. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” He whose heart is full of this hope conducts himself accordingly—he purifies himself. Knowing that when Jesus shall appear, I shall be like Him, I ought to be as much as possible, even now, such as Jesus. How powerful and efficacious is this truth of the return of Christ, and what

practical effect flows out of its expectation! This hope is the measure of holiness to us, as it is the motive.183 Those also who are in heaven (Rev. 5:10) say in their songs, “We shall reign on the earth.” This is the language of the saints who are already on high, surrounding the throne. Their language is, “We shall reign” and not “we reign.” They are themselves in a state of expectation, like the Lord Jesus Himself, awaiting that which is to happen; namely, that His enemies be made the footstool for His feet.184 Study also (Matt. 13:24-43) the parable of the tares and the wheat. The tares—namely, the evil which Satan has done where the good grain has been sown—are to increase until the harvest, which is the end of this dispensation or age. The evil which he has caused by heresies, false doctrines, false religions, all this evil will continue, increase, and ripen: these tares, we say, will increase in the Lord’s field, until the harvest. Here, then, is a positive revelation, which gives a formal contradiction to the idea of the millennium by the Holy Spirit, apart from the return of the Lord.

We have now seen that the coming of Christ allies itself to all the thoughts, to all the motives of consolation and joy, and to the holiness of the church, yea, even to the dying bed; and that Christ will bring back with Him those who have previously quitted the body. We have also seen, on the one hand, that it is the coming of the Saviour which will be the means of the restitution of all things; and on the other, that evil is to increase in the Lord’s field until the harvest.

May the Lord apply these truths to our hearts, dear friends, on one side, to detach us from the things of the world, and, on the other, to attach us to His coming—to

Himself in Person; and we shall purify ourselves even as He is pure. There is nothing more practical, nothing more powerful to disentangle us from a world which is to be judged, and at the same time to knit us to Him who will come to judge it. Certainly, there is nothing that can better serve to shew us wherein ought to be our purification; nothing which can so console us, invigorate us, and identify us with Him who has suffered for us, in order that we who suffer might reign with Him, co-heirs in glory. Assuredly, if we were expecting the Lord from day to day, there would be seen in us a self-renunciation which is rarely seen among the Christians of the present age. May none of us be found saying, “My Lord delayeth his coming!”

Lecture 4 Read Luke 20:17. First Resurrection; or, Resurrection of the Just

The subject which I propose for this evening’s lecture, is the resurrection, and particularly the resurrection of the church apart; that is, the resurrection of the just as altogether distinct from that of the unjust.

We have already spoken of Christ, the Heir of all things; of the church as co-heir with Him; and of the coming of Christ to reign before the thousand years—an event which we must not confound with the day of the resurrection of the unjust, and of the judgment before the great white throne, which will not take place until after the millennium. We have now to see that the church will participate in this coming of Christ; it does so as the subject of the first resurrection.

There is no need to speak to you of the resurrection of Jesus as being the seal of His mission; it is an admitted truth; it is enough to quote Romans i:4, where the

apostle tells us that “Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power … by the resurrection of the dead.”185 This resurrection was the great fact which demonstrated that Jesus is the Son of God; but it was likewise, for other reasons, the great theme of the preaching of the apostles, the basis of their epistles, and of all the New Testament.

Let us commence by saying, that the difficulty people find in the subjects of which we are treating do not arise from the word of God not being simple, clear, and convincing; but from this—that preconceived ideas often rob us of its natural sense. We have habits of thinking apart from the Scripture, before we know it; then it is we find inconsistencies—incompatibility—in that which presents itself to us, not suspecting that this incompatibility belongs alone to human preconceived opinions.

The doctrine of the resurrection is important under more views than one. It links our hopes to Christ and to the whole church, in one word, to the counsels of God in Christ; it makes us understand that we are entirely set free in Him, by our participation in a life in which, united by the Holy Ghost to Him, He is also the source of all strength for glorifying Him, even from the present time; it sustains our hopes in the most solid manner; finally, it expresses all our salvation, inasmuch as it introduces us into a new creation, by which the power of God places us, in the second Adam, beyond the sphere of sin, of Satan, and of death. The soul in departing goes to Jesus, but is not glorified. The word of God speaks of men glorified, of glorified bodies; but never of glorified souls. But, as before observed, prejudices and human teachings have taken the place of the word of God, and

the power and expectation of the resurrection has ceased to be the habitual state of the church.

The resurrection was the foundation of the preaching of the apostles, Acts 1:22. “One must be with us a witness of his resurrection.” This was the constant subject of their testimony. Let us now see in what terms they testified.

Acts 2:24. “Whom God hath raised up.” So verse 32: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”

Chapter 3:15. “And killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.”

Chapter 4:2. This doctrine of the resurrection was acknowledged as the doctrine publicly preached by the apostles; it was not that the soul in dying went to heaven, but that the dead shall live again. As the Pharisees were the greatest enemies of the Lord whilst He was upon earth—that is to say, the falsely righteous ones, as opposed to the truly Righteous One—so in like manner, Satan, after His death, raised up the Sadducees, who were enemies to the doctrine of the resurrection; Acts 4:1; 5:17.

Acts 10:38, 40, 41. Peter testifies to this same fundamental truth before Cornelius the centurion and his friends. Paul preached it to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia, saying (Acts 13:34), “And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead … he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.”

Acts 17:18-30. He announces, in the midst of the learned Gentiles, this doctrine, which was the stumbling-stone of their carnal wisdom. Socrates and other philosophers

believed, after a fashion,186 in the immortality of the soul; but when these men, curious in science, heard of the resurrection of the dead, they mocked. An unbeliever is able to discourse about immortality; but if he hears about the resurrection of the dead, he turns the subject into derision. And why? Because in virtue of the immortality of the soul he may exalt himself, he can elevate his own importance. There is something in the idea which can ally itself to man such as he is; but to think of dust raised again—of a living and glorious being made out of it—this is a glory which belongs only to God, a work of which God alone is capable. For if a body reduced to dust can be reconstituted by God into a living and glorified man, nothing is hid from His power. With the immortality of the soul man can still connect the idea of self—of power in the body; but when the leading truth is the resurrection of the body, and not the immortality of the soul, man's impotency becomes glaring.

See again (whether the apostle was right or not in appealing to the prejudices of the Pharisees), Acts 23:6: where Paul directly affirms, that it was for the preaching of this doctrine he was called in question In chapter 24:15, he tells the same truth. In chapter 26 he gives it to king Agrippa as the reason of his detention; so also verse 23. From these passages it is easily seen, that the resurrection was the basis of the preaching of the apostle and of the hope of the faithful.

We now come to the second part of our subject, the resurrection of the church apart, or the special resurrection of the just.

“There will be,” says the apostle, “a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust”; but the resurrection of the just, or of the church, is a thing altogether apart—which has no relation with that of the wicked, which does not take place at the same time with this last, nor after the same principle. For, although both the one and the other are to be accomplished by the same power, there is in the resurrection of the just, a particular principle, namely the habitation of the Holy Ghost in them, which is foreign to the resurrection of the wicked; Rom. 8:11.

The virtue of the resurrection embraces the life, the justification, the confidence, the glory, of the church. God Himself is made known unto us by the name of “God who raiseth the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9), who introduces His power into the last depths of the effects of our sin—into the domain of death—to bring men out of it by a life from which that moment puts them outside the reach of all the dreadful consequences of sin— a life close to God.

Romans 4:23-25. It is in “God who quickeneth the dead” that we are called upon to believe; it is the resurrection of Jesus which is the power—the efficacy—of our justification. This is the truth presented in the passage before us. Our union with Jesus raised gives us acceptance with God. We ought to see ourselves already as beyond the tomb.

On this account the faith of Abraham was a justifying faith. “He considered not his own body now (already) dead”; but he believed in a God “who quickeneth the dead”; for this reason his faith “was counted to him for righteousness.”187 The resurrection of Jesus was the great proof, and as to all its moral effects, the establishment of this truth, that the object of our faith is

that God raises the dead. This truth is pointedly expressed in the first epistle of Peter (chap. 1:21). The application is made to us by our union with the Lord.

Colossians 2:12. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” The church is raised now, because Christ is raised as its Head. The resurrection of the church is not a resurrection whose object is judgment, but simply the consequence of its union with Christ, who has been judged in its stead.

We may observe in this passage how these truths hang together. The resurrection of the church is a thing of itself, because the church participates in the resurrection of Christ; we are raised, not only because Jesus Christ will call us from the grave, but because we are one with Him. It is by reason of this unity, that, in partaking of faith, we are already raised with Christ, raised as to the soul, but not as to the body. The justification of the church is, that it is risen with Christ.

The same fact is expressed in Ephesians 1:18, etc., and 2:4-6. Paul never said, “If I am saved, I am content.” He knew that it is hope that makes the soul active, which excites the affections, which animates and directs the whole man; and he desired that the church should have the heart full of this hope. Nor is it enough for one of us to say,” I am saved”; it is not enough for the love of God, which is not satisfied unless we are participators of all the glory of His Son; and we ought not to be indifferent to His will.

Ephesians 2:6 shews forth the same truth. The presence of the Holy Ghost in the church is that which

characterises our position before God. As the Spirit of Christ is our consoler, and helps us in our infirmities, testifying withal that we are children of God, and making us able to serve God, so it is on account of the Holy Spirit who is in us that we shall be raised; and it is on account of the Holy Spirit also that the principle of the resurrection of the church is quite other than that of the resurrection of the wicked. Our resurrection, we say, is the consequence of the abiding of the Holy Ghost in us (Rom. 8:11)—a very essential difference. The world does not receive the Holy Ghost, "because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him," John 14:27. Now, "our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 6:19); our soul in consequence is filled, or at least it ought to be, with the glory of Christ. Our body, also, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, will be raised according to the power of the Holy Ghost who dwells in us; a thing which can never be said of the wicked.

It is the resurrection which, having introduced us into the world of the last Adam (even now as partaking of this spiritual life), will introduce us in fact into a new world, of which He will be the Head and the glory, since He has acquired it and will reign there as the risen Man.

Observe, in the passages concerning the resurrection, not one speaks of a simultaneous rising of just and unjust; and those which refer to the resurrection of the just speak of it always as of a thing distinct. All will rise. There will be a resurrection of the just, and a resurrection of the unjust, but they will not take place together. I will cite the passages successively, which refer to it. It is at the coming of Christ that the church will rise; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Cor. 15:23.

The idea of a resurrection of the just was familiar to the disciples of Christ; and such is represented as to happen in Luke 14:14, “Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”

But before coming to direct proofs, I would express the conviction that the idea of the immortality of the soul, 188although recognised in Luke 12:5 and 20:38, is not in general a gospel topic; that it comes,189 on the contrary, from the Platonists; and that it was just when the coming of Christ was denied in the church or at least began to be lost sight of, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came in to displace that of the resurrection. This was about the time of Origen. It is hardly needful to say that I do not doubt the immortality of the soul; I only assert that this view has taken the place of the doctrine of the resurrection of the church, as the epoch of its joy and glory.

Luke 20:35, 36. “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection, then, mentioned here, belongs only to those who shall be made worthy of it. “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age,” that is to say, this world of joy, of the reign with Christ. That resurrection of the dead, then, belongs to the period spoken of, and not only to eternity. “Neither,” adds the Saviour, “can they die any more… for they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” The wicked shall be raised to be judged, but those others shall be raised because they have been accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection which Jesus has obtained. We see, in the” passage quoted, the proof of a resurrection which concerns the children of God alone; they are the sons of God, being the sons of the

resurrection. To be a son of God, and to have part in this resurrection, is the title and inheritance of the same persons.

John 5:25-29. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” It is customary to oppose the latter part of this passage to a view of the resurrection of the just apart; but we shall see that the whole passage enunciates, and even explains and strengthens, the truth which is occupying us.

Two acts of Christ are presented as the attributes of His glory; one, to make alive; the other, to judge. He gives life to those whom He will, and all judgment is entrusted to Him; in order that all, even the wicked, should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. Jesus has been shamefully entreated here below; God the Father takes care that His claim of glory shall be recognised: He (Christ) gives life to whom He will—to their souls first, and then to their bodies. These glorify Him of good will. As to the wicked, the way of obliging them to recognise the rights of Jesus, is to judge them; and this judgment is in the hands of Jesus. In the work of vivification, the Father and Son act together, because those to whom life is given are put into communion with the Father and Son. But as to judgment, the Father judgeth no man,

because it is not the Father that has been wronged, but the Son. The wicked will own Jesus Christ in spite of themselves when they are judged. At what epoch will these things be accomplished? For the wicked, at the time of the judgment— the judgment both of the living, and of the dead before the great white throne; for the just, the children of God, when their bodies shall participate in the life already communicated to their souls (the life of Christ Himself) at the resurrection of the just. The resuairrection for these is not a resurrection of judgment, but simply/to repeat it again, the exercise, towards the bodies of God's cnildren, of that quickening power of Jesus, in which He has already worked upon their souls, and which, in God's good time, shall work upon their bodies. "They that have done good," says our text, "unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."190 But the objection is made, Jesus has said (v. 28), "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." The wicked and the just will then evidently rise together. But three verses before (v. 25) it is said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Hour comprehends here all the space of time which has elapsed since the coming of the Saviour; and under this word is contained two states of things quite different, seeing that the dead heard the voice of the Son of God during the time He was living on earth, and that they have been hearing it for eighteen centuries since. This, then, is the interpretation. The hour191 for giving life to the soul is an hour which has lasted eighteen centuries already. And the hour is also coming for the judgment. The word hour has the same sense in the two passages. That is to say, there is a time

of quickening and a time of judgment; there is a period during which souls are quickened, and a period when bodies shall be raised. For us, the resurrection is only the application of the quickening power of Jesus Christ to our bodies. We shall be raised, because we are already quickened in our souls. The resurrection is the crowning of the whole work, because we are children of God, because the Spirit dwells in us, because (as far as our souls are concerned) we are already risen with Christ.

There will be a resurrection of life for those who have been already quickened in their souls; and a resurrection of judgment for those who have rejected Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:20, 23, sets forth very clearly the connection which exists between the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. The order of the resurrection is explicitly shewn. “Christ is become the firstfruits of them that slept” (v. 20); “of those which slept,” and not of the wicked. They that are Christ’s shall rise at His coming; then cometh the end, the time when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. When He comes, He will take the kingdom, but at the end He will deliver it up. The appearing of Christ will therefore take place before the end; it will be for the destruction of the wicked. He will come to purify His kingdom. “Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s, at his coming. Then cometh the end.”

1 Thessalonians 4:14-16. “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”; “and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” It is the complement—the filling up—of

our hopes; it is the fruit of our justification, the consequence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

The righteous dead shall rise first; then the living righteous shall be changed, and “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord.” All this is a matter which belongs exclusively to the saints—to those who, sleeping or living, are Christ’s, and who will be, from that moment, for ever with the Lord.

Philippians 3:10, 11. “To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead.”

Why speak thus, if it be true that good and bad must rise together, and in the same manner? This resurrection from among the dead is just this first resurrection which Paul had before his eyes. I am willing, he says, as it were, to lose all, to suffer all, if, cost what it may, I arrive at the resurrection of the just: such is my desire. Evidently the resurrection from among the dead was a thing that concerned the church exclusively. I might say, like the apostle, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

As to the period or interval which elapses between the resurrection of the faithful and the wicked, it is a circumstance altogether independent of the principle itself, that is, of the distinction of the two resurrections. Our faith on this point depends upon a revelation, which has only importance, because God has so chosen to order it for His own glory. The period is only mentioned in the book of Revelation under the expression, “a thousand years.” Between the two resurrections a

thousand years elapse. The only point then on which I cite the book is upon the length comprised in the reign of the Son of man on the earth. The passage is found in Revelation 20:4, “And I saw thrones… ”

The world will then know that we are the objects of grace, that we have been loved as Jesus Himself has been loved by the Father.

If the first resurrection—that of the just—is not to be taken literally, why should the second—that of the unjust —be so taken? As the object of our hope, and source of our consolation and of our joy, it is but a small thing to know that the unjust shall be raised; but the precious thing—the essential— is to know that the resurrection of the just will be the consummation of their happiness; that in it God will accomplish His love towards us; that, after having given life to our souls, He will give life to our bodies, and will make of the dust of the earth a form suitable to the life which has been given to us on the part of God. We never read in the word of God of glorified spirits, but always of glorified bodies. There is the glory of God, and the glory of those who will be raised.

I desire, dear friends, that the knowledge of this truth, by the power of Christ, on which depends its entire accomplishment, may strengthen us in our hearts unto all perfection. For this knowledge in all its extent is that to which the scripture applies the word “perfection.” Christ was thus made perfect as to His state and position before God; we, also, ourselves are now perfect by faith, in acknowledging that we are raised with Him, as we shall be later as to our bodies. May your bodies, souls, and spirits, be preserved blameless until the

coming of our Well-beloved! May this truth of the resurrection of the church become bound up, in our minds, with all the precious truths of our salvation consummated in Christ, and may it be accomplished in the plenitude of our salvation in our bodies also!

Lecture 5 Read Daniel 2. Progress Of Evil On The Earth

We have been occupied, as yet, with the union of Christ and the church conformed to His image; of the coming of Christ Himself, and of the resurrection of the church, by which it gets a share of this glory of Christ as co-heir.

The subject for to-night is not so full of joy and happiness, but it is right that we should know the testimony which God gives of human wickedness. Let me hope, dear friends, that the consequence of knowing it will be to produce unfeigned seriousness ‘of spirit. The sight of the progress of evil, and of the judgment which it draws down, ought, first of all, to have the effect of making us avoid it; and, secondly, of impressing us with the power of God, who alone can remove it. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,” Heb. 12:25-29. This passage gives the apostle’s view of the great change that will take place when the power of evil will be overthrown.

What we are about to consider will tend to shew that, instead of permitting ourselves to hope for a continued progress of good, we must expect a progress of evil; and that the hope of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord before the exercise of His judgment, and the consummation of this judgment on the earth, is delusive. We are to expect evil, until it

becomes so flagrant that it will be necessary for the Lord to judge it.

First, I shall shew that the New Testament constantly presents to us evil as going on increasing until the end, and that Satan will urge it on until the Lord destroys his power; secondly, I shall endeavour to shew the character which this wickedness will take, in its external form, as a secular power. In other words, what I have to say can be reduced under two heads:—

Firstly, the apostasy which takes place in Christendom itself. Secondly, the formation, the fall, and the ruin of the Antichrist, in the sense of a visible power.

I begin with Matthew 13:36, the parable of the tares. It brings out this circumstance that, whilst men slept, the enemy sowed tares in the field of the householder; and that, upon the demand of the servants whether the tares ought to be plucked out, the answer was, No—that the wheat and the tares were to grow together until the harvest. It is, then, the sentence of the Lord, that the evil, which Satan has done in the field where the good seed of the word has been sown, shall remain and ripen there until the end. It is an express declaration, that the efforts of Christians shall not have the result of taking away the evil, which is to remain until the day of judgment: “Let both grow together until the harvest.” The harvest is at the end of the world—the end of this age; that is, of the dispensation closed by the coming of Christ. We must bear in mind that now, in God’s dealings with us and by us, we have to do with grace and not with judgment. We have not to judge the world. Even could we say with certainty of such an one—he is a child of the devil, he is precisely on that account out of our

jurisdiction; it is a tare. We have to do with grace; we cannot lay hand upon the evil which Satan has produced; but we can act as instruments of grace, for God permits us to sow good seed.

The tares are not simply wicked men—pagans; these last have not been sown among the good grain. The tares are some particular evil sown by the enemy after Jesus Christ had sown the good seed. What, then, we may call heresy, corruption of the truth in whatever way, or to whatever extent, will remain until the harvest. The evil which Satan has produced by a corrupted religion will exist until the end. All our efforts ought to be directed—not to pluck out the tares, but to gather in the children of God—to assemble together the co-heirs of Jesus Christ.192 1 Timothy 4:1. “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy…”

We have no reason to expect, in the ordinary meaning given to it, the progress of the gospel; there may be, and will be, as much as is necessary for the gathering together of the children of God. But that which we ought to expect is contained in these words—a kind of picture of the last times— “Some shall depart from the faith.” Compare 2 Peter 2:1-3.

2 Timothy 3:1-5. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come… ” Are we to heed what men say? No, but what God says. Observe the language which Jeremiah uses to Hananiah; Jer. 28:6, etc. And so we must reply when we are told that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channels of the sea. We believe, undoubtedly, that the

knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth; but that is not the question. The question is, How will this be accomplished? By the judgment of God. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness,” Isaiah 26:9.

Let us return to the passage in Timothy. “Men shall be lovers of their own selves,” etc. These are not pagans; they are Christians, nominal Christians; for it is written, “Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” The characters, indeed, drawn by the apostle, are those of pagans, such as they are painted in the lowest degree of vileness at the beginning of the epistle to the Romans, and nearly in the same terms. And it is added, concerning these men of the last times, “They shall wax worse and worse.” We see the same expectation of evil in 2 Timothy 4:1-4: “I charge thee therefore before God,” etc.

It is worth remarking, that the tares were already sown in the days of the apostles; and in one sense it is a happy thing for us. If it had happened later, we should not have had the testimony of the word in this matter in order to warn us, and direct us when these sorrowful events came to pass; as it is, we have the perfect light of God upon this state of things.

1 Peter 4:17. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” Compare these words with Acts 20:28-31: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall

men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This state of things began during the lifetime of the apostles.

1 John 2:18. This passage declares, that "the last time" does not mean the time of Jesus Christ, but the time of Antichrists. These were precursors of the great Antichrist. That which characterises the last time is, not the spread of the gospel over the whole earth, but the presence of Antichrist.

Jude. This epistle is a treatise in itself upon the apostasy; and in verse 4 we have a succinct description of its character. The apostle says, that he found it needful to exhort the believers to contend for that which they had already received. Some had already crept in amongst them, who were the germ of the apostasy; and this was to continue until the judgment of Jesus Christ. For, after having described their character more in detail, he adds (v. 15), that it is this class which would be the object of the judgment of Jesus Christ when He should come. Of course, therefore, the evil, which was manifested in the church almost from the beginning of its existence, would remain until the coming of Christ. In verse 11 we get three sorts of apostasy brought together in these men: natural apostasy, ecclesiastical apostasy, and open revolt, upon which last the judgment will fall. First, the character of Cain is given us — apostasy of nature — hatred, unrighteousness; secondly, Balaam— teaching wrong things for a recompense (this is the ecclesiastical apostasy); and thirdly, the character of Korah, that is, of him who set himself up against the rights of priesthood and of royalty, the royalty of Christ, in the types of Moses and Aaron.

Alas! it is evil, and not the gospel, which will gather together the world. “And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the false prophet … to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty,” Rev. 16:13, 14.

But, it is said that the secular power of corrupted Christendom has disappeared by judgment, and that the destruction of its influence will give place to the gospel. But the Spirit says, “The ten horns (kings) which thou sawest upon the beast (the Roman empire), these shall hate the whore (ecclesiastical power), and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled,” Rev. 17:16, 17. Christians are desiring the destruction of the influence of the great whore upon the world; but even should her external power be destroyed, would the kingdoms become the kingdoms of Christ? On the contrary, the kings will give their power to the beast. The great whore has ruled the beast; at length her power and her riches shall be taken away from her, but only that the ten horns may give their power to the beast, that all uncertainty may be dissipated, and that his self-will and blaspheming character may be fully manifested in his last apostasy. It is the power of corruption and seduction which will give place to the power of open rebellion against God. Thus we get the transition from corruption to rebellion.

2 Thess. 2:3-12. “That day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.”

All this must happen before the day of the Lord comes. We must take the facts as the word of God reveals them. Christians, having seen the promise in the scripture that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, have said, Yes, we will fill it; whilst in the scripture this event is attributed to the glory of Christ. The spirit of His mouth, by which the Lord will destroy the wicked one, is not the gospel, but the force and power of the judgment of Christ. See Isaiah 11:4, “With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”; Isaiah 30:33, “The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”

We may observe, that this Antichrist will unite in his person the characters of wickedness which have appeared from the beginning. First, man has always wanted to have his own will; secondly, he has exalted himself against God; thirdly, he has put himself under the guidance of Satan. These are just the three things which will be reproduced in the Antichrist —all the energy of man exalting itself against God, the king doing according to his will, his coming after the power of Satan. It is the ripened fruit of the human heart, which is itself an Antichrist.

It is known to all of us, that there have been three successive beasts: the empire of Babylon; then the empire of the Persians; then the empire of the Greeks, or of Alexander in particular; and that the fourth is the Roman empire—a beast with marks altogether peculiar to itself.

At the beginning, or rather before the beginning of these four monarchies, the throne of God was on the earth at Jerusalem. In His temple, above the ark where the law was deposited, Jehovah manifested His presence in a

sensible manner. But at the commencement of this present period, which is that of the Gentiles, the throne of Jehovah was taken away from Jerusalem (as is detailed in the chapters from 1 to 11 of the prophet Ezekiel). The glory of Jehovah, which the prophet had seen in chapter 1 near the river Chebar, he sees, in chapter 11, leave Jerusalem; it departs from the house (chap. 10:18, 19), and from the city chap. 11:23". It is a remarkable fact, that the glory of Jehovah has quitted its terrestrial throne. But more; at the same time, this terrestrial power was transferred from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, and government entrusted to men. So we read in Daniel 2:36-38, "This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, an a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory."

You thus see that, by the destruction of the last king of the Jews, earthly dominion passed to the Gentiles in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. He began by establishing a false religion by force. He made a statue that all the world was to worship, and he became lifted up in heart; hence he was made to become as a beast for seven years. That is, instead of conducting himself humbly as a man before God—as before Him who had given him his power, on the one hand, he exalted himself, and on the other, ravaged the world to satisfy his will.

Omitting the second and third monarchies, which are not at this moment of direct importance to us, and pursuing the character of the fourth, we meet in it certain lineaments worthy of remark. The Jews have been in a state of captivity from the time of Nebuchadnezzar unto this day. It is true, that there was a return of the people from the captivity of Babylon, but

without their having ceased to be under the power of the Gentiles. The throne of God has in no sense been re-established; and if God did permit the Jews to return to their country for a short time, it was that His Son might appear at the commencement of the fourth monarchy. And, in fact, it was at the moment when the fourth monarchy, under its imperial form, had become the universal power (Luke 2:1),— it was just at that time, we say, that the Son of God, by right King of the Jews and of the Gentiles, was presented to them. And what reception did He meet? They crucified Him. The chief priests, who, as viewed by God, were the representatives of religion upon earth, and Pontius Pilate, the representative of earthly power, joined in league together to reject and put to death the Son of God. Thus the fourth monarchy became guilty of rejecting the rights of the Messiah. The Jews, as we shall see presently more in detail, are set aside; and then comes in the calling of the church for the heavenly places. But as to that which concerns the church on earth, we have seen it marred by the seed of the wicked one, and the apostasy which resulted from it; we have seen afterwards, that this corruption will give place to a more open and daring revolt of the beast itself (that is, of this same fourth monarchy under a new and last form yet to be developed). It is this that will be the occasion of its judgment (Dan. 7:9-11, 13, 14), “I beheld till the thrones were cast down [set,]193 and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him; and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 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." Verses 13, 14, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

This is the kingdom given to the Son of man, when the fourth beast is destroyed. The judgment and destruction of the fourth monarchy has not yet taken place, as we know from Daniel 2:34, 35: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." That is, before the stone cut out without hands spreads out and fills the whole earth, it completely destroys the statue: gold, silver, brass, iron, clay, are carried away as chaff before the wind. None of this is yet accomplished. In the action of the stone, no mention is made of a change of character of the statue; it is a blow— a sudden one—a blow which breaks in pieces, destroys, leaves not a trace of the existence of the statue; as it is said, "No place was found for them." The Roman empire—the feet, and with the feet all the rest—disappears. By this one blow the

whole is pulverised, destroyed, annihilated; and after this judgment, the stone which fell upon the statue becomes a mountain which fills the whole earth.

Did Christianity break to pieces the fourth monarchy, when it began to be promulgated? In no wise. The Roman empire has continued; it has even become Christian; nay, more, the feet of the statue were not then in existence. The aa of destruction, which is marked in the fall of the little stone upon them, does not represent the grace of the gospel; nor has it any reference to the work which the gospel accomplishes. Besides, it is after the total destruction of the statue that the stone begins to grow; which signifies that the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, which is to fill the whole earth, will not begin to spread until after the fourth beast has been judged and destroyed.

There remains a difficulty to be cleared up in the history of this beast. It may be alleged that the Roman empire does not exist in our days. It is an additional proof in support of what we have been saying. In Revelation 17:7, 8, the angel says, “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not”: the Roman empire, as an empire, exists no longer; but what follows? “And shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder.” It existed; next, it exists no more; then, it will come out of the pit. It will have a really diabolical character; it will be a full expression of the power of Satan.

That which we learn, then, in general, of this beast, is, first, that from its beginning, the Roman empire has been guilty of the rejection of Jesus as king of the earth here below; secondly, that later in the time of this fourth

monarchy, there is a little horn that speaketh great things; and, lastly, that this fourth beast, after having ceased to exist for a season, will reappear upon the scene out of the bottomless pit, and be destroyed on account of the great words which the little horn spoke. This beast is connected with a power described in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, “That wicked one, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders,” whose destruction is found in verse 8. There is another description of the last head of the beast (see Rev. 17: n), which is the beast himself.

Daniel 11:36, etc.194 The agreement between this passage and 2 Thessalonians 2:9 is clear. We see in both the same exaltation of himself against God. In the epistle, the power of Satan is added, because the wicked one is presented in his character of apostasy and iniquity; in Daniel 11 in his earthly and royal character. As to the third mark which we have signalised in iniquity —the will of man, it also appears: “the king shall do according to his own will.”

It is observable, also, that this wicked one is alluded to in John 5:43. The Jewish nation will receive him who comes in his own name. The iniquity, then, of the heart of man arrives at its height in the last head of the fourth monarchy. Isaiah 14:13-15 describes the self-exaltation of the same under the title of the king of Babylon. “Thou hast said in thine heart.” etc.

It is exactly all the privileges, all the rights of Christ, which this king arrogates to himself: “I will ascend into heaven”— what Christ only has done; “I will exalt myself above the stars of God”—the throne of Christ is above principalities and powers; “I will sit, also, upon the

mount of the congregation in the sides of the north." "It is the palace of the great king," the king of Israel at Jerusalem. Christ is to come with clouds— "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds," says this one: his end is, "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

I am afraid that many a cherished feeling, dear to the children of God, has been shocked this evening; I mean, their hope that the gospel will spread itself over the whole earth during the actual dispensation. It was just the church's task to proclaim the glory of Christ everywhere; but as for the fact in result, if we express ourselves according to the word of God, as we see it in the later epistles and other scriptures, we shall see all that is powerful in this world in operation, but without regard to God. All the intelligence of man, his faculties, his talents, his knowledge, will be displayed; all that which can seduce the heart, and master the mind, all the resources in the character and nature of man, apart from conscience, will astonish the world, and draw it into following the beast, and place them under the influence of Antichrist; because the glory of man in self-exaltation, and not service to Christ in humiliation, is man's natural bent. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased."

But, you will say, to insist upon such a result is to discourage all our endeavours to propagate the gospel on the earth. We answer, If false hopes are entertained, you are already deceived. It is indeed true, that the view which has been taken of the progress of evil is not very encouraging to the efforts of those whose hopes have been founded on their own ideas. But ask yourselves this question, Did the fact that God told Noah that He was

going to destroy the world, and did his full conviction that the judgment of God was about to come, prevent his preaching to his fellow mortals? On the contrary, it was precisely this which animated him, in order that he might gain those who had ears to hear. The conviction that false Christianity will become more and more refined, more corrupt in the world, ought to give but the more energy and activity to the love of him who believes, and the nearness of the judgment of God, instead of paralysing our efforts, ought to drive us with more power, more energy, more faithfulness, to present the gospel—the only means of causing men to escape the righteous judgments which threaten them.

When I say that the tares, instead of diminishing, will continue to grow, do we thereby hint that the good seed will not increase? By no means. If the evil is to ripen for judgment, God gives, at the same time, power to the testimony that would separate the good from it. This I believe to be God's usual mode of procedure. If we were to see three thousand souls converted in Geneva in a day, it would be said the millennium is come, the gospel is going to spread over the whole world. How is it? There are perhaps not three hundred converted in a year. The conversion of many thousands at Jerusalem, what did it prove? That God was going to judge that city, and that He saved from that perverse generation those who should be saved. Whenever we see evil increasing, and God at the same time acting in drawing away from it those who believe, it may be taken as a sign that the judgment of God is nigh. It cannot be denied, that God is acting powerfully by His Spirit in these days; we ought to thank Him with all our hearts. Let it be a sign to us,

that God will remove His own children from a world which will shortly be judged.

There are two signs of the proximity of judgment: the one is, that piety increases, and that all the resources of man develop themselves in a wonderful manner; the other is, that Christians are withdrawing from this state of things. In either case, there is nothing to hinder us working for our divine Master. On one side is to be seen the work of grace operating, deepening, extending, and God separating His children from the evil around; on the other hand are to be seen all the principles of the wicked one in manifest development, la the word of God I see an express declaration, that the present economy will have an end, and the evil go on to a greater and greater height, until that wicked one is destroyed by the coming of Christ.

Romans 11:22. Let us conclude with the warning which the Saviour gives us: “Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

Has the church kept itself in this goodness of God? Truly Christendom has become completely corrupted; the dispensation of the Gentiles has been found unfaithful: can it be again restored? No: impossible. As the Jewish dispensation was cut off, the Christian dispensation will be also. May God give us grace to continue steadfast in our hope, and to rest upon His faithfulness, which will never fail us!

Lecture 6 Read Daniel 7:16-27. The Two Characters Of Evil: Ecclesiastical Apostasy, And Civil Apostasy

Up to the present, dear friends, we have only spoken of the happiness that pertains to the church, save that, at our last meeting, we traced the progress which evil will make on the earth until the very end. This evil has a twofold character, upon which I will speak a few words, seeing that the relations which exist between the power of evil and the judgments which await it, have a special interest for the children of God. When the evil has come to its height, God will destroy it.

The verses which I read are the interpretation which the angel gives to Daniel of the vision of the beasts which the prophet saw; and, as always occurs in symbolic prophecies, the interpretation contains many new features. In the explanation given to Daniel, all that will happen to the saints is added; but the principal subject of the chapter is the beast who exalts and elevates himself against the most high God.

I say, dear friends, that there are two characters in the evil which manifests itself on the earth: the first is ecclesiastical apostasy; and the second, apostasy of the civil power itself.

First, apostasy of the church—viewed in its outward responsibility here below—has in principle taken place. Later on there will be a more open manifestation. As to the second, the civil power will rise against Him to whom all government belongs— against Christ, whom God will establish king over the earth. It is in the time of the fourth beast, the Roman empire, that this revolt will take place.

Before entering directly on our subject of to-day, I desire to make a few remarks on Matthew 25, to which we shall return when we speak of the nations; for all the peoples of the earth which shall exist at the end of the times shall be either subject to Christ and, consequently, saved, or in rebellion and, consequently, destroyed. But to remove doubts on the subject of this chapter, a few words must be said on it. People believe ordinarily that the judgment of which this chapter treats is the last or general judgment; but they are wrong. It is the judgment of the living nations on this earth, and not of the dead. Accordingly I did not speak of it when we treated of the resurrection of the dead. In this chapter of Matthew, I repeat, there is no question whatever of resurrection. In chapters 24 and 25 are seen the judgment of the Jews, what will happen to that nation; next, what will happen to believers; then, what will happen to the Gentiles. It is the judgment of the quick, and not of the dead. It is this when we read, “Before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” What has given rise to the notion that it is the judgment of the dead is the statement that “these [the wicked] shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” But this would only tell us that the judgment of the living would be final like that of the dead. Certainly, when God judges the living, His judgment sends some to eternal punishment and others to life eternal. The judgment of the living is as certain as that of the dead. We shall be able to speak of it in its place.

Last time I was speaking mostly upon the tares, that is, the ecclesiastical apostasy—of the progress of evil there,

—of that which has happened to the church as on earth. Now I am going to look into the apostasy of the civil power in its outward form, and the judgment which will come on it from God; for His wrath will fall upon this power. If at the close, ecclesiastical evil in some sort disappears in the character of secular power; and if the civil power has exalted itself, ecclesiastical power, is not the less vigorous: only it has not the supremacy; and herein is the difference. In other words, it is not that ecclesiastical power has improved itself, only it is not exercised in the same way; but its influence is not the less pernicious. It is no longer an ecclesiastical power wielding the secular arm, which is seen riding on the beast, and ruling it; but it takes a more mysterious form, and consequently a more dangerous one. Its occult influence continues, though deprived of its outward splendour; for by their pride men now begin to lift themselves up and combine against God, and so prepare the way for the son of perdition.

Although ecclesiastical wickedness is always the worst, nevertheless, as we have been saying, civil apostasy will have its time of manifestation. Scripture tells us that all civil power is of God. Now, in the same way that the church loses its proper force and character by its rebellion against God, so the civil government will be found in a state of revolt and apostasy when, instead of confessing fealty to God, it sets itself up against God, who is the source of its authority.

The Spirit of God being the true strength of the church, the church’s revolt begins when, instead of being subject to Christ, it gives itself over to the will and power of man, leans upon man’s aid, and renounces truth to follow error. Christ is the Head: the Holy Spirit

is the only strength by whose means the church can act; and when the church is not guided by the Spirit, and is not in this sense truly subject to Christ, Christendom is practically apostate. Now, at the end of the present dispensation, the civil power will be found in this same state of revolt; and be it remembered that apostasy in the civil power is a thing much more manifest and prominent than in the church. This will take place in the bosom of Christendom; and it would seem that ecclesiastical wickedness will be its moving power. We have examples of this in Scripture. When Absalom was in revolt against David, Ahithophel was his counsellor; 2 Sam. 15. The instigator of the rebellion was, without doubt, Satan; but Ahithophel directed the conspiracy against the king. It was Dathan and Abiram, simple Israelites (though men of renown), who rebelled against Moses; but the revolt is called that of Korah, who was a Levite, and seduced the others. In the same way, God accuses the priests and the prophets of Judah of the iniquity of the people, since the civil power had only followed their evil counsels. The same has been the order of things in Christendom. Those who ought to have instructed the church, who ought to have represented the wisdom of God, and have recalled governments to a sense of their duty towards God, being themselves in a revolt against Him, have concealed the truth, have taken a form which has seduced the world, and have thus led the civil power into the same departure from God. There will be a revolt of this latter, but the ecclesiastical power will be the soul of it.

What do we find at Armageddon? A false prophet who falls there along with the beast. From the beginning to the end, there is always a beast, and with the beast a

false prophet. It is the one or the other who guides the rebellion. But at the end the beast takes the lead, as being able to act more directly and freely: thus it is the beast which at the last is the direct object of judgment. Such we find to be the case from Daniel 7. But spiritual energy has been ministering to its power.

From the instant that the beast, or the civil power of the fourth monarchy, shall set himself in revolt against God, this monarchy will be found in relation with the Jews; and it is this which introduces us anew into the history of this people. You remember, dear friends, that when the fourth beast appeared on the scene of this earth, there were Jews at Jerusalem; Christ was presented as King of the Jews to the fourth beast, represented by Pontius Pilate, who rejected Him in this character which He is never to lose. At the end of the age the same fact will be reproduced: the Jews—returned to their own land, though without being converted—will find themselves in connection with the fourth beast. There will be saints among them; and this fourth beast, exalting himself against God, will put himself in direct opposition to Christ, as the King of the Jews. It is true, indeed, that his deadly opposition to Christ will go much farther than at the time when Christ stood before Pontius Pilate; for he will then arrogate to himself His rights as King of the Jews; and it is then that Christ, coming down from heaven, will destroy the beast, together with the Antichrist, and will take the remnant of the Jews to be His earthly people, and will put all nations under His feet.

This being the case, you will readily understand that many things in Scripture apply to the Jewish saints, that is, to this faithful remnant of the Jews, and not to the

church. We know, e.g., that, during the time of the ecclesiastical apostasy, there have been many persecutions against God's faithful children; in such cases, the saints of all times could draw comfort from the consolations of God found in such passages; but in these last times, when it is a question of persecution of the saints, the application must be made to the remnant of the Jews, whose "blood will be shed like water," Psalm 79:3.

If we consider the history of the beast in a general manner, whether in its pagan form, as under Tiberias Caesar, and the other emperors; or, under the influence of the corrupted Christianity of the Middle Ages, we see there have been, at every succeeding epoch, persecutions against the saints; and we may use as of them the scriptural expressions, "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth," Rev. 18:24. But when we come to the time when the civil power will openly raise the standard of revolt—to the moment when these prophetic facts have their full realisation, it is upon the Jews that the persecutions will fall; to whom, therefore, these citations have their primary application. From the moment that the rights of Christ, as King of the Jews, are agitated, it is the Jews who will appear on the scene; for the Jews are God's earthly people. But where is the church then? It will be entirely out of the scene at the time of these last persecutions.

Before we quote the chapters which treat of the apostate civil power substituted for the apostate ecclesiastical power, we would insist again upon this, that the revolt of the ecclesiastical power is not the less dangerous because it has not the supremacy. On the

contrary, we repeat, that this power is the secret counsellor of all the evil. The only change that will take place is, that it will cease to have outwardly the preponderance; and the not seeing this has led many into error. Because men, in the use of ordinary observation only, have perceived that it could no longer depose kings, they have supposed that the ecclesiastical power had absolutely disappeared. No attention has been paid to that which the children of God might ascertain out of His word, namely, that its moral influence would survive the destruction of its political existence; and that it was precisely this influence which would urge on the power, properly so called political, to revolt against God, and thus to its destruction.

I am not saying that it is not the will of man which, by its own energy guides the beast to its eternal ruin. This is indeed true; but in the meantime, it is the ecclesiastical apostasy which, either arrogating to itself the power, or shutting the door to the manifestation of the will of God, seduces by its machinations the inhabitants of the earth to acknowledge and adore the beast.

I advert to the passages which refer to the observations just made. First, the end of Daniel 7, where the fourth beast is found; afterwards, Revelation 16, and especially chapter 17, where the two are distinguished, namely, the great whore or Babylon, and the beast. In chapter 17 we get the woman clothed with scarlet, a power whose principal element is ecclesiastical; she is mounted on the beast (civil power). After that, “the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore (ecclesiastical power), and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God hath put in their hearts to … give their kingdom to the beast."

Let us now examine the passages which concern the sources of evil, and more particularly the kind of evil which is exhibited in that power which is in rebellion against God, namely, the fourth monarchy. Let us see the form which the rebellion will take.

In Revelation 12:3 we find the source of the power, "the great red dragon." We are there, as it were, admitted behind the scenes, and see Satan desiring to destroy Him who is to govern all nations with a rod of iron—Christ; and, in Christ and with Christ, the church. It is properly the power of Satan, and the great combat. The word of God puts in contrast the Father and the world; flesh and Spirit; Satan and the Son of God. Here we have the great dragon or Satan, who wants to devour Him who is to govern the nations with a rod of iron; but it is in heaven that we see it. Afterwards (v. 9), he is cast out—an event which has not yet taken place.

Here there is a difficulty to some minds. Because the devil is cast out of the conscience, which is true,195 they suppose that he is cast out of heaven. Satan has indeed no power over our conscience if we have understood the value of the blood of Christ; but he is still in heaven, where he accuses the children of God. We see from Ephesians 6:12 that the wicked spirits (margin) are in the heavenly (margin) places: by reason of this, there will be a battle in heaven—a battle, the effect, not of intercession or of priesthood, but of power, which will take place, perhaps, with the help of angels; but which will ever be a work of power. At the same time, though Satan shall be cast down from heaven, he

will not yet be chained to the bottomless pit; and the fruits of his wickedness will not yet have found their limit; so it is said, “the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

Satan, cast down from heaven to earth, will act there by the agency of the Roman empire. Revelation 13 describes what will appear on the scene as the providential instruments by which he will seek to make good his power on the earth: “I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns.”196 This is the terrestrial agency. This beast will unite all the characters of the three previous beasts.

The authority of the dragon becomes established in the Roman empire—in the beast with seven heads and ten horns. “I saw one of its heads, as it were, wounded, to death”; that is, one of the governing forms of the Roman empire ruined. But afterwards the mortal wound is healed, and the form which was destroyed re-established. Now, if we compare the acts of the little horn of the same beast in Daniel, we shall find that the little horn “whose mouth speaketh great things, before whom three [horns] fell”—that this very one, we say, becomes the beast itself. That is, the beast will find itself under the dominion of this little horn; as we might say, that Napoleon was the French empire, because he wielded all its resources. This beast will be the civil power, the Roman empire, in apostasy, or in open revolt against God.

But there is also another beast (which is not the Roman empire) which exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him.

Verses n to 14. “And I beheld … and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth.” Here is something which has the semblance of Christ’s power, and which later, in the midst of the Jews, will wear the form of Christianity; but, as understood by the apostle, it is Satan’s. It is, then, the second beast who will seduce the inhabitants of the earth, and who will cause them to follow the first, namely, the civil power of the Roman empire.

“And I saw one of the heads, as it were wounded to death.” This has already happened to the imperial form of the Roman empire; but the wound is to be entirely healed. Thus the beast loses its imperial character for a time, and its wound is afterwards healed. When this takes place in all the astonished earth, men go after it.

The imperial beast will therefore again be seen on the earth, and in all the earth they will wonder after it. But we have also read that the second beast, by the great wonders which he doeth, seduces the inhabitants of the earth. This second beast will appear at the end under the character, not of a beast, but of a false prophet; all his secular power will be lost. He will no longer be a beast ravishing, devouring; this feature will be entirely effaced. And he will be seen as the false prophet,197 who will be recognised as the second beast already spoken of, by the perfect resemblance of his character, as the person, in short, who has done the things which the second beast has done, but who appears at the close under this new form. Compare Revelation 13:14, with 19:20. If we take the moral side of the events already accomplished, we know who has exercised all the power in presence of the civil authority; but there will be one also who will do great wonders and seduce the inhabitants of the earth.

Farther on we shall have to look into the consequences of all this; in the meanwhile, let us gather up what we have been saying. Chapter 12 shews us the dragon in heaven, as the origin, the first cause of all this rebellion. Chapter 13 gives us the Roman empire under its imperial form, as the providential visible agent. This beast is wounded to death, but his mortal wound is healed. There is also in its presence another power who seduces the inhabitants of the earth; and it is when the mortal wound of the first beast is healed, “that all the world wondered after the beast.” Add to this the circumstance of chapter 19, namely, that the second beast ceases to be one, and appears at the end as a false prophet.

In chapter 17 there is a description of the first beast, which gives us other particulars. Verses 7, 8: “And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: 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, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

It ascends out of the bottomless pit, i.e., becomes positively the power of Satan towards the end; and this is what will happen when Satan, being cast out of heaven (which event will occur when the church has been caught up into heaven), will come down to the earth in great wrath. Then, under his influence the beast (the Roman empire) “that was, and is not, and yet is,” resumes his strength and form; that is, the civil power,

instead of being in submission to God, takes the character of Satan, and signalises itself, at his instigation, by an open revolt against the power of God.

To find all the marks for recognising this last form of the beast, we must wait until the imperial head of the Roman empire, the eighth king, shall appear in the world. This must take place before its ruin.

When the Roman empire existed under its pagan form, it had not ten kings; but when this beast reappears (let us keep in mind that it is the Roman empire), ten kings will give their power to it, instead of ten kings replacing it. More than this, it is after having been destroyed that it will come again into existence. In a word, it is not the pagan beast, nor the history of the middle ages, nor of ten barbarian kings (if indeed ten could be pronounced upon with any certainty), who have taken the place of the empire, but "and yet is";198 that is, the mortal wound will be healed, and the imperial beast will re-appear.

The ten kings "shall give their strength and power unto the beast"; there will be an imperial head—an emperor, and ten kings, who will give him their power; the kingdoms will continue in existence, but it will be a confederation of them. As an illustration, we may refer to the kingdoms of Spain, Holland, Westphalia, etc., under Napoleon. There has been the beast; there have been, it may be, ten kings; but never yet ten kings giving their power to the beast who was not, and who came anew into existence."

"The seven heads are seven mountains." (We are still occupied with the Roman empire.) "And there are seven kings; five are fallen, and one is" —namely, the imperial

one which existed in the time of John,— “and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth (because the seven have passed), and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” That is, there will be an eighth head, one of a peculiar character, who will re-unite all the power of the beast, who will be the beast himself, and who, whilst a head apart, is still one of the seven. It is the imperial head under a new form; for there are to be ten kings, who will give their power to this eighth head; and it is in this form that it will go down to destruction. It is exactly here that the coming of Christ, and of the church, connects itself with the subject of which we are treating; Rev. 19; 2 Thess. 2.

We must yet quote from Daniel 11:36-45: “And the king shall do according to his will.” Compare this with 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, and following verses.) We may observe, that in Daniel 11 the question is not one of ecclesiastical supremacy, but rather of wars between civil powers in the East. With verse 36 begins the history of Antichrist, of “the king who shall do according to his own will,” just like the little horn in chapter 7, and who at last, after dealing in an idolatrous and apostate way in Jerusalem, finds his end with that first beast. It is a king like any other, a king of the earth, but exercising his power in the holy land at the close. Christianity, as such, is not brought before us, nor the mystery of lawlessness in it: that had preceded the appearance of the lawless one according to 2 Thessalonians. Again, I say, it is no question of ecclesiastical matters, but of a king of this earth, who becomes an object of attack to the kings of the North and of the South.

One remark on 2 Thessalonians 2 for our consolation in the midst of this sad concourse of events. “Now we beseech you, brethren,” says the apostle, “by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind,” etc. Those who love the truth will entirely escape this deceivableness of unrighteousness, to which, on the contrary, all those will be deUvered by the judgment of God, who have “not received the love of the truth”; but “have pleasure in unrighteousness.” This is the evil which is coming, and the world ought to be warned of it; because some may be salutarily frightened at the thought and led to consider the word of God. And why is all this announced to the children of God? It is in order that they may draw out of it the fullest comfort, and may separate themselves from all that which drags men on to destruction. I say not that we Christians shall be involved in the catastrophe; but that, by being told beforehand of the judgments which will take place at this dreadful crisis, we are led to detach ourselves, even at this present time, from the causes which, by their nature, and by the justice of God, bring it on.

The apostle, it would seem, had spoken a good deal of these things to the church of the Thessalonians, and had taught them to expect the coming of the Lord. Now, what had Satan done? He had tried to terrify them, in telling them that the day of the Lord was there (Greek, present, 2 Thess. 2:2). No, says the apostle, I beseech you, by the coming [presence, see Greek] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him [which will precede that day], that ye be not soon shaken in mind, etc. (as if we were already in it). This day will come upon the lawless one, and not upon you; you will

already have been caught up to Him, and you will accompany Him personally in that great day when He will appear.199 The day is present, said the seducers; the day is come! No, says the apostle, the day will not come until you, the Lord's faithful ones, have been caught up into the air, and until the lawless one shall be revealed.

These consolations are again confirmed (v. 9, 10): "Even him whose coming… is with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth." It is only needful to add, that in this chapter it is the description of the moral character, and of the unbridled iniquity of the lawless one, and of the power of Satan; whilst, in Daniel 11 it is the picture of his outward character.

It is to be feared, dear friends, that the exposition of prophecy this evening has not been the view which you have been hitherto led to take of it. I have been endeavouring to open out the distinction, and at the same time the connection, which there is between the civil and ecclesiastical power; as well as the distinction, and at the same time the connection, between the ecclesiastical apostasy and the civil apostasy. The two things are closely allied, because we read that the second beast exercises all the power of the first beast before him; and that the false prophet, which is the second beast, is thrown into the lake of fire with the first.

We have also noticed that this fact connects itself with the presence of the Jews at Jerusalem, in whose vicinity the beast will come to his end—an event which will close this present dispensation, in bringing out the power of

Christ upon the earth, which will lead to the union of Christ with the remnant of the Jews; and in consequence of that, to the bringing of all nations under His sceptre. I have only spoken of the fourth beast.

There are two points worthy of remark in connection with the history of Israel; firstly, as to those nations who were in league against Israel, when this people were owned of God; and, secondly, as to the nations who carried them into captivity. As yet we have only been discussing the times of the Gentiles, that period during which the kingdom was transferred from the Jews to them; that is, the time of the four beasts—the times of the Gentiles. Daniel speaks of the four beasts only; Ezekiel speaks of the nations before the four beasts, and after; but never of" the times of the Gentiles," so called.

It is during the period comprised in the history of these four beasts that Christianity comes in, and that the moral rebellion takes place. But we have seen that the ecclesiastical power, which has been the instrument of leading to such a result, by assuming the place of God—taking away faith, and, at the same time, disgusting reason; putting aside natural religion, and, under the pretext of the rights of revelation, corrupting and perverting this revelation itself, so that men should have no other objects than themselves—this power, I say, having played a part in the drama of iniquity, which the enemy of our souls and of the Lord, has brought to pass, will itself fall a victim to the violence of the human will—that will which itself has withdrawn from subjection to God; and as incapable, by its pretensions to religion, openly to serve Satan, as it is of serving God with sincerity—in one word, incapable of truth, it becomes the cowardly counsellor and abettor of that iniquity of

which it cannot constitute itself the actor. It provokes crimes which it dares not consummate, and of which the civil power is to be the active chief and executor. Dear friends, when the natural conscience is more upright than that resulting from religious forms, it is all over with the church—it is near its end; and the candlestick will be removed where it serves only as the instrument of wickedness, such as the world can hardly imagine. As men say, the corruption of that which is most excellent is the worst of corruptions. As to the Antichrist properly speaking, he will deny that Jesus is the Christ; he will "deny the Father and the Son" John 2:22): he will not confess Jesus Christ coming in the flesh (2 John 7); he will deny everything sacred—the Father, the Son, Jesus the Messiah, Jesus come as Man. We have seen his character, his acts, his form, and the source of his power. Satan will work directly by him. It will be a sort of satanic imitation of what God has done. The Father has given the throne to the Son, and the Spirit acts according to the power of the Son in the church before Him: in the same way the dragon (Satan) will confer the throne on the beast, and great authority; and the second beast (spiritual power, real Antichrist, and false prophet) exercises all the power of this last beast (civil power) before him; Rev. 13:12.

The judgment will decide in such a state of things. May God make us attentive to the character and to the end of the pride of man! The energy of his will is able to employ, and put to use, all the means which God has delegated to him— and they are great; and the results, so long as God has patience with him, will be great also. But man will be the centre of all this; the feeling of his responsibility before God goes for nothing. God is, in

reality, dishonoured and degraded. The end of all man's most noble, most worthy aims—God—is wanting in it all. In fine, it is the same principle and the same source—sin—from the beginning to the end. Man, acting of his own will to satisfy his lusts, ambitious of knowledge for selfish ends, exalting himself to a level with God, disobedient, and, as a consequence, acting under the influence and energy of Satan:—such is the character of Antichrist; such is the history of Adam in his first fall—his first sin. It is the commencement and consummation of the same wickedness, whose evidence and contrast appeared in the death of our beloved and perfect Saviour, who made its expiation for us. May His name of grace and glory be eternally blessed; and may He engrave these things upon our hearts! Certainly He will preserve His church from all these evils which menace the world for His church is united to Him.

Lecture 7 Read Psalm 82.

Judgment Of The Nations, Which Become The

Inheritance Of Christ And Of The Church

The last verse of this Psalm contains the subject which is to occupy us this evening: "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations." It is God who is to judge the earth, and, as the consequence of this judgment, to become the possessor of all nations.

I have spoken of Christ, Heir of all things, with the church His co-heir; then of the coming of Christ, or of the time when He will take His inheritance; and of the resurrection of the church, or of the moment when the raised church participates with Him in this inheritance. Even departed souls—blessed as they are with Him—

wait for the resurrection of their bodies to enjoy the fulness of blessing and of glory. It is for this reason that a Christian may desire death, because he is thus delivered from all affliction and trial; but he awaits the resurrection for the consummation of his glory. We have spoken of the progress of evil, and shewn that, far from the world being converted by the preaching of the gospel, the tares are to increase and to ripen until the harvest. And we have seen the evil come to its height in the eighth head of the beast, which goes down to destruction in the apostasy of the civil power of the fourth monarchy, and in the false prophet, who, having seduced the world to do homage to the beast and to take his mark, is destroyed with him.

We have seen that there are two beasts, and that the second is transformed into the false prophet. Compare Revelation 13 with the end of chap. 19. The scene now extends itself; for not only will the fourth beast be destroyed, but the nations will be judged. All the races of men who inhabit the earth, which took their rise in the division of the children of Noah into their respective families, will be found at the end gathered together and judged by God. All that is high and lifted up will be brought low by the power and glory of God, in order that God, in full blessing, may enjoy the kingdom, and may have the inheritance of all nations.

I have touched, at our last meeting, the most difficult part, namely, the point where the two dispensations touch, and where the evil caused by the failure of the existing one (failure, of course, on man’s part) requires the intervention of God; and, as a sequel, the judgment which terminates the dispensation. I have spoken specially of the rebellion of the beast abetted by

Antichrist, because it is, in fact, the consummation of the apostasy. But when this event takes place, there comes also the judgment of all nations. God does not only judge the last rebellion of the Antichristian beast; but having made His power felt—the moment of His wrath being come—He judges all nations.

This is what we read in Revelation 11:15-18: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.” Let us follow up the passages which speak on the same subject.

We before remarked, that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the true King over the whole earth, was presented to the fourth beast and to the Jews, that is, to the Gentiles and Jews (to the Gentiles in the person of Pontius Pilate, and to the Jews in the person of the high priest). He was presented to the world and to His own, and was rejected. But in a much more extended sense it is said, “The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come.” It is the wrath of God breaking forth against them by the judgment of His Son.

Psalm 2. Two other things are set forth. First, that the Son is anointed (margin) king upon Zion, God's holy hill, and that He has the heathen for His inheritance: Zion is His throne; the nations, His inheritance. Secondly, His way of dealing with the nations—a way entirely opposed to the gospel: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." The sceptre (rod) of Christ, in the gospel, is a rod of goodness and love; it is everything that is most sweet, most powerful, in His love; it is not a sceptre of iron. The psalmist is speaking of the kings of the earth: "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; … kiss the Son." The decree of God is, that His Son shall be anointed, that is, declared King over all the earth; and He invites the kings of the earth to submit themselves to Him. He says to them, "lam about to speak in my wrath; I give the heritage of the nations to Christ; He will bruise you with a rod of iron; He will break you in pieces: now then, submit yourselves to Him, to my Son, King in Zion." These kings follow their own ways; their policy is settled according to the wisdom of man. Alas! it is not of Christ, King in Zion, that they think. Go and speak to the kings of the earth of Christ, King in Zion: you would be taken for one out of his senses. Nevertheless, God has decreed His reign surely, irrevocably, and He will bring it to pass in spite of the kings of the earth; He will establish Him King in Zion, and will give Him the nations as His heritage, and the ends of the earth for His possession. "Now," says He by the prophet Micah, "shall he be great unto the ends of the earth," chap. 5:4.

At the birth of Christ, hatred burst forth upon the least appearance of His royalty. When the cry was heard that a long had appeared, immediate efforts were made to get rid of Him. Will the nations then, at last, listen to the

invitation made to them to submit themselves? The answer is to be found in Psalm 82.

These judges of the earth will have to give an account of their conduct. “They know not, neither do they understand.” “I have said, Ye are gods,” for God Himself had set them as having authority over the earth (“the powers that be are ordained of God”); but God can judge them. It is not Christians who hold the above language; it is He who has the right of judging those whom He has named judges—of setting aside those subaltern powers, in order to take to Himself His great power and reign.

We find in Psalm 9:1-7, that the place where this judgment will be exercised is the land of Israel, and that the Lord will manifest Himself in this act of power. Verse 5: “Thou hast rebuked the heathen; thou hast destroyed the wicked (Antichrist); thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.” Verse 15-20 is not the language of the gospel; it is the prophetic demand—the righteous demand—of judgment. This it is which explains those difficulties which Christians often find in the Psalms, owing to not having understood the difference of the dispensations. To convert the wicked, by the announcement of the grace of God, is the gospel; what we have been reading is something quite different. Once the gospel has run its course, Christ will demand righteous judgment against the world. It is no longer Christ, at the right hand of the Father, sending down the Holy Ghost to gather together His co-heirs; but Christ calling for righteousness and asking it (generally by His Spirit in the humble and lowly ones of the Jewish nation) against the proud and violent men. If God were not to execute judgment, the evil would only grow worse and worse without any consolation for the faithful. God does

not execute it until the evil has arrived at its height. Antichrist and the nations rise up against God and His Christ, and the earth must be cleared of His enemies to give place to the reign of God Himself. It is not David asking to rule over his enemies; but Christ who demands judgment, because the time is come.

We may observe the same truth in Psalm 10:15, 16: “The Lord is King for ever and ever; the heathen are perished out of his land.” There is a general principle running through this class of Psalms, of a terrible judgment upon the wickedness of the nations—God acting as Judge in the midst of judges.

A passage in Isaiah 2:12-22, also presents to us the great day of God upon earth: “For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is high and lofty… when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” It is not for the judgment of the dead, but of the earth.

To make you understand that this judgment applies to all nations, and that it is after this, and by this means, that God will fill the earth with the knowledge of His name, we beg you to turn to Zephaniah 3:8: “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.” The intention of God is to assemble the nations to pour upon them His indignation—a terrible judgment. For our expectation then, as to when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, we refer to verse 9. This blessing will come to pass after He shall have executed the judgment,

and put away the evil-doers. This passage is a very explicit revelation.

The same truth, namely, that the knowledge of the Lord will spread by the effect of His judgment, is presented to us in Isaiah 26:9-11: “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness “; for it is added, “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.” Grace does not produce the effect, but judgment. Again, we say, that the determination of Jehovah is to assemble the kingdoms, to pour out on them His indignation, and all the fierceness of His wrath. It will be a terrible day, and one which the world ought to be expecting.

Another passage in support of the truth we are urging is found in Psalm no: “The Lord (Jehovah) said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Jesus is set down at the right hand of God the Father, until His enemies are made His footstool. Until that time, He acts by His Spirit to gather together Christians: He sends down the Holy Ghost to convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. But the day will come when God will make His enemies His footstool; and it is on this account, perhaps, that Jesus says, “Of that day knoweth no man … neither the Son, but the Father,” Mark 13:32. It is written, that He will inherit all things. This has been prophesied of Me; Jehovah said to Me, “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” It is not such a year, such a day; but I go to sit at the right hand of God until — until the moment when the Father will have accomplished this decree: for the Lord Jesus, God blessed for ever, receives the kingdom as Man-mediator. Now, as to the accomplishment of the decree, it is when

“the Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.” We discern the boundary of this dispensation clearly marked, that is, Christ set down at the right hand of Jehovah, until Jehovah puts His enemies under His feet. After that come the words, “Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” This is what Jehovah will accomplish, when the Lord, at the commencement of the exercise of His power, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath; shall judge among the heathen; shall fill the place with the dead bodies, and shall wound the heads over many countries; or rather, chief over a great land. In Jeremiah 25:28, the same subject is presented; and it is the end of all that we see around us: “And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink.” See also verse 31.

There are yet two facts to remark on. First, it is at Jerusalem principally that all this disaster will take place; secondly, God has named in His word all the nations who will participate in it. We shall see all the descendants of Noah, of whom we have the catalogue in Genesis 10, reappear on the scene at the moment of this judgment of God. We shall find nearly all of them under the beast or under Gog.

As to the passages which concern Jerusalem, we may cite Joel 3:1, 9-17; Micah 4:11 to the end of the chapter.; and Zechariah 12:3-9: “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah; and will

smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." Chapter 14:3, 4: "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

It is said in Acts 1 that Jesus “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” that is, upon the Mount of Olives. Compare Ezekiel 11:23. “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives,” says the Holy Ghost in Zechariah 14:4; “his feet,” the feet of Jehovah. Though indeed He was the man of sorrows, Jesus is Jehovah, and has been so from eternity.

As to the second point on which we have to remark, namely, that the nations, the descendants of Noah, will be ranged either under the beast or under Gog—the two principal powers; if you consult Genesis 10:5 you will read, “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands.” In the generations of the sons of Japheth are named Gomer,200 Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Mesec, and Tiras. Of these we get Gomer, Magog, Tubal, Mesec, under the same names in Ezekiel 38 as followers of Gog; you will also find there Persia which was united to Media (Madai), and from whose hands it received the crown (as we are told in Daniel 8 and other places), so that there only remain Javan and Tiras to be accounted for. Those mentioned above are the nations which comprise Russia, Asia Minor, Tartary, and Persia (all the people, in short, of which the empire of Russia is composed, or which are under its influence). They are described as under the dominion of Gog, prince of Rosh (the Russians), Mesec (Moscow), and Tubal (Tobolsk).

The children of Ham are pointed out in Genesis 10:6. Of these, Canaan has been destroyed, and his country turned over to Israel; Cush (Ethiopia) and Phut are also found (Ezek. 38:5; see margin) under Gog; those of Cush only in part, and for the reason that one part of the family of Cush established itself on the Euphrates, the

other on the Nile,201 that is, north and south of Israel. Those of the north are then, by their position, in direct relation with the partisans of Gog. Mizraim, or Egypt (for Mizraim is none other than the Hebrew name for Egypt), and the remainder of Cush and the Libyans, you will find in the scenes of the last day; Daniel 11:43.

As to the children of Shem (Gen. 10:22), Elam is the same as Persia, of which we have already spoken. Asshur is named in the judgment, which will take place in the last times (Alicah 5:6; Isaiah 14:25; chap. 30:33); also in the conspiracy of Psalm 83, and in other places. Arphaxad is one of the ancestors of the Israelites. We know nothing of the family of Joktan. It is supposed to be a people of the East. Aram, or Syria, was displaced by Asshur, and is found under the title of the king of the North. The same remarks, it appears, may be made of Lud. Javan (Greece) is to be in the last combat; Zech. 9:13. Of all the nations, Tiras is the only one besides Joktan, which is not named as to be in this great judgment. We speak only of the word of God. Profane authors unite Tiras and Javan in Greece; but with this we have not to do. In the present day, we may observe Russia extending her power exactly over the nations who will be found under Gog.202 Daniel 11 introduces us to two other powers, to which we must direct our regards; they are the king of the South, and the king of the North. The chapter contains a long account of already accomplished events, as to their wars, etc.; but after this come the ships of Chittim (v. 30), and then there is an interruption in their history. These kings were the successors of the great king of Javan (Greece): the one, possessor of Assyria; the other, of Egypt. The object of their fightings was Syria and the Holy Land. In

verse 31-35, the Jews are introduced as set aside during a long period of time (see v. 33). It is said, “And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed”; and then (v. 36), “And the king shall do according to his own will”: this is Antichrist. In verse 41, we have him in the land of Israel, in that territory which is the cause of the difference which exists between the king of the North and the king of the South. “And at the time of the end, shall the king of the South push at him.” That is, after a long interval, behold again the king of the South brought, in this chapter, upon the scene. And this has historically occurred only four years ago, after an interval of nearly two thousand years. The greater part of the nations who, as we are told, are to be at the feet of Gog, are now coming under the dominion of Russia; “and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind.” Antichrist will be the object of the attack, at one and the same time, of the king of the South, or Egypt; and of the king of the North, the possessor of Asiatic Turkey, or Assyria. I do not say who the king of the North will be at the end; but we see that the circumstances and the personages described in the prophecies which have reference to this time appointed — “the time of the end”—begin to appear. It is nearly two thousand years since there has been a king of the South; and it is but a few years that he has appeared anew. In the same way a great people has appeared, of which the world a century ago hardly knew the existence, and which now rules over the exact countries of the Gog in Ezekiel. We do not desire that you should fix your attention too much upon events which are taking place in our time; it is only when we have

explained the prophecy, that we advert to the circumstances which pass around us. All nations have their attention occupied about Jerusalem (Zech. 12:3), and know not what to do about it. The king of Egypt wants to call the whole country his own; the king of the North is unwilling to cede it (the Turk being the actual king of the North, or Assyria). The kings of the North and South dispute for the same country, which they fought over two thousand years ago. This is just what the prophecy says is to occur at "a time appointed." We do not mean that all this yet comes out plain; for example, the ten kings cannot be enumerated and Antichrist has not yet appeared. But the principles which are found in the word of God are acting in the midst of the kingdoms where the ten horns are to appear: that is, we find all western Europe occupied about Jerusalem, and preparing for war; and Russia, on her side, preparing herself, and exercising influence over the countries given to her in the word; and all the thoughts of the politicians of this world203 concentrate themselves on the scene where their final gathering in the presence of the judgment of God will take place—where "the Lord shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor," Micah 4:12. It is a remarkable coincidence. In observing what is passing around us, we recognise certain prophetical descriptions; at least we see those who are to act, or upon whom God will act, developing the characters which prophecy signalises.

If you take the trouble, dear friends, to follow the chapters which we have been quoting (many others, as doubtless there are), you will understand Matthew 25, which speaks of the Lord sitting upon His throne, and gathering all the nations (an allusion to Joel 3), judging

them, and separating them “as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.”204 Let us remember one thing; it is, that we Christians are sheltered from the approaching storm. We have said nothing this evening about the church; but let us recall its place to our memory. It is, that during these events (yea, even at present, as united to Him by faith), its place is to be with Christ, to accompany Him; the church has this privilege, this glory, this special character, that of union with the Lord Jesus Christ; and if we search for the church in the old Testament, it is Jesus Christ we find. A striking example of this truth is found in Paul’s quotation (Romans 8), taken from Isaiah 50, where Christ says, “Who is he that shall condemn me?” which Paul applies to the church, the church being united to Christ.

The union of the church in a single body, whether Jews or Gentiles, was not revealed in the Old Testament; if we seek for it, it is Christ Himself that we find. Although there are many things in the relationship of Jehovah with Zion, which also exist between God the Father and the church, nevertheless it is not in Zion that we are to look for the church. In the Old Testament, the privileges of the church are in Christ Himself, in the Person of Christ, because the church has the same portion as Christ. This is it (see Eph. 1:22,23), “which is the fulness of him that filleth all in all”: for this reason we are not to look for the church in the prophecies. The church is the body of Christ Himself; and Christ is to judge, not to be judged. We have seen that Christ is to smite, to break in pieces the nations; this is said also of the church. The church has nothing to do with that of which we have been speaking, as if it were to be subjected to the same judgments; Rev. 2:26, 27. Its place is not to be in the

midst of the nations that are to be broken in pieces, but to be united to Christ, enjoying the same privileges as Christ, and breaking to pieces the nations with Christ. There is nothing true, as regards Christ, in the glory which He has taken, which is not also true of the church.

It is always precious for us thus to understand our place, that of joint-heirs with Christ. And the more we think of this, the more our strength will be increased, and the more we shall become in our minds, as heirs of God, detached from this world, which is judged, as, indeed, the church is justified. The church is justified; we see not yet the effects of it, because the glory is not come. The church only has the fruits of justification in glory; the world only has the fruits of wickedness in the judgment. Nevertheless, it is true that the church is united to Christ. The world is judged because it has rejected Christ. “Righteous Father,” said the Saviour, “the world hath not known thee.” But this is what grace has done for us. Just as unbelief separates men entirely and for all eternity from Christ, grace by faith has united us entirely and for ever to Him; and we ought to bless God for it.

Lecture 8 Read Romans 11.

Israel’s First Entry Into The Land Was The Result Of Promise We have, in Romans 11:1, this question put by the apostle as to Israel: “Hath God cast away his people?” As far as chapter 8 he has been detailing the history of us all as men, whether Jews or Gentiles; he has fully stated the gospel of the grace of God, namely, the reconciliation of man by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After having established this point, he begins in chapter 9 the history of the dispensations: he

makes known the manner in which God has acted towards the Jews and the Gentiles; and in this chapter 11 he starts the question, “Hath God cast away his people?”

We have seen, in studying the history of the four beasts, and also that of the church, that the Jews were put aside; and that the gospel has appeared in the world to save sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, in order to reveal the hidden mystery of a heavenly people, and that “unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.” A Jew, who is now convened, enters into the dispensation of grace; but upon this comes the immediate inquiry, “Hath God cast away his people?”

It is not concerning His spiritual people that the question is asked, but concerning His people according to the flesh— His people, the Jews. The apostle says (v. 28), “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” In this chapter 11 the gospel is not in view,—namely, the calling of the Jews, as a people, into grace by the gospel—although, indeed, there is a gospel election from among this people; but the question treated is that of the Jews, as God’s manifested people, of Jews according to the flesh, who are enemies as to the gospel, but beloved on the principle of a national election on account of the fathers.

Because, then, the gospel has come in, has God rejected His people? Does He count them enemies? The answer of the apostle is, “God forbid.”

We Christians boast of this, that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”; well we may—it is a

scriptural principle: but to whom does the apostle apply it? Not to us, but to the Jews. It is always important to consider the context of every passage of the word of God, and not to force it out of the situation where God has placed it.

The present is the dispensation of the calling of a heavenly people, and, in consequence, God puts aside His earthly people, the Jews. The Jewish nation is never to enter into the church; on the contrary, “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”; until all the children of God, out of them composing the body of the church in this dispensation, are called.

Israel, as a nation, will be saved. “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer.” He has not cast away His people. As touching the gospel they are enemies, and they will so remain until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: but the Deliverer will come. This is a summary of the divine purpose as regards the Jews.

From the moment it can be affirmed of the dispensation of the Gentiles, that it has not “continued in the goodness of God,” we can say that, sooner or later, it will be cut off. “Toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

The root of the olive-tree is not alone Israel under the law; far from it. It is Abraham, to whom the call of God was addressed. It was the calling of a single man, separated, elect, the depositary of the promises. The choice fell upon Abraham, and upon the family of Abraham according to the flesh. Israel has served for an example, as depositary of the promises and of the

manifestation of the election of God; now it is the church which so serves.

In order to make you understand the root of the promises, which is Abraham, I will touch upon the series of dispensations which preceded. First, at the fall of man we see him left to himself. Although not without witness, he had neither law nor government; and, as a consequence, evil was carried to the highest pitch, so that the world was full of violence and corruption; and God purified it by the deluge.

Afterwards came Noah. A change took place; it was this — that the right of fife and death, the right of taking vengeance, was given into the hands of men: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” To this is added a blessing to the earth, greater or less. “This same,” said Lamech, in speaking of Noah, “shall comfort us,… because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed”; and a covenant is made by God with Noah and with the creation; a covenant in witness of which God gives the rainbow. “The Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground,” Gen. 8:21; 9:6, 12, 13. This was the covenant given to the earth immediately after the sacrifice of Noah, the type of the sacrifice of Christ.

It may be said, in passing, that Noah failed in this covenant, as man always has done. Instead of drawing blessings out of the earth by tillage, he begins to cultivate the vine, and gets intoxicated. By this forgetfulness and fault of his, the proper principle of government also lost its power in its first elements. Noah, who held its reins, became the subject of the derision of one of his sons.

We see in all dispensations the immediate failure of man; but that which is lost in all of them by human folly will find its recovery at the end in Christ; whether it be blessing to the earth, prosperity to the Jews, or the glory of the church. All that has appeared and has been spoiled, under the keeping of the first Adam, will blossom again under that of the Second Adam, Bridegroom of the church, and King of the Jews and of the whole earth.

Another still more signal failure took place after Noah's. God had made His judgments terribly felt in the deluge, and His providence was thus revealed. What did Satan do? As long as he is unbound he takes possession of the state of things here below'. No sooner did God manifest Himself in His providential judgments, than Satan presented himself also as God; he made himself, as it were, God. Is it not written, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God? "Satan made himself the god of this earth. Joshua 24:2: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time … and they served other gods" said the Lord to the Israelites. It is the first time that we find God marking the existence of idolatry. When it made its appearance, God calls Abraham; and thus, for the first time, appears the call of God to an outward separation from the state of things here below; because Satan having introduced himself as influencing the thoughts of man, as the one whom man was to invoke, it was necessary that the true God should have a people separated from other people, where the truth might be preserved; and consequently all the ways of God towards men turn upon this point—that here below God called Abraham and his posterity to be the depositary of

this great truth, “There are none other gods but one” (see Deut. 4:35). Consequently, all the doings of God upon the earth have reference entirely and directly to the Jews, as the centre of His earthly counsels and of His government. This is shewn us in Deuteronomy 32:8. It was according to the number of the children of Israel that the bounds of the nations were set. It was with reference to Israel that He gave them their habitations.

You will see also these two principles distinctly presented in the word; on one side, the promises made to Abraham without condition; and on the other, Israel receiving them under condition, and so losing all. But as Abraham received the promises without condition, God cannot forget them, although Israel may have failed in the conditions which they engaged for. And this is very important; for if God had failed in His promises towards Abraham, He could fail also in His promises towards us.

It was at Sinai that Israel received the promises under condition, and failed; but this in no wise weakened the validity and the force of the promises made to Abraham four hundred years before. I am not now alluding to the spiritual promise, “All nations shall be blessed in thee,” which has found a partial fulfilment by the gospel in this dispensation; but I allude to the promises made to Israel, which rest on the same faithfulness of God.

Let us begin our citations upon this subject out of Genesis 12. The chapter is the call of Abraham, who was then in the midst of his idolatrous family. The terms of the promise are very general; but they contain earthly blessings as well as purely spiritual ones. The two kinds are found in the same verse equally without condition. The spiritual part of the promise is only once repeated

(chap. 22) and that to the seed; not so the temporal ones. In chapter 15 we have the promise founded upon a covenant made with Abraham, also without condition; it is an absolute gift of the country. Here is also found that of a numerous posterity (v. 5, 18); and even the exact limits of the country given. (Verse 18; and following.) In chapter 17:7, 8, the promise of the earth is renewed. These are confirmed to Isaac (chap. 26:3, 4), and to Jacob (chap. 35:10, 12). Here are "the promises made unto the fathers," and to Israel, "beloved for the fathers' sakes": they are made to Abraham, whether spiritual or temporal, without any condition. If you say that the spiritual promises are without condition, by parity of reasoning the temporal ones are. There is as much certainty in the promise made to Abraham, "To thee will I give this land," as in those which have been made in favour of us Gentiles.

There is no need to cite the wrestling of Jacob. It is, in general, thought to be a proof of extraordinary faith in him. This is true; but, at the same time, it is a faith which, exerted after conduct much to be reprehended, was to be accompanied by an evident humiliation. It was God who wrestled with him; but God also sustained his faith. So shall it be with Israel at the end; they shall feel the effect of leaning on the flesh; but God shall take this controversy into His own hands and bless them after all.

Thus God made Himself "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob"—heirs of the promises, and pilgrims upon earth.

We shall see that in this name, God, as it were, makes His boast on the earth, and that the faithful in Israel ever find in it the motives of their confidence. "Thus

shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations," Exodus 3:15.

But in another point of view, Israel placed themselves in relationship with God, in a way which is opposed to all that; namely, their own righteousness—the principle of the law— by virtue of which, acknowledging that we owe obedience to God, we undertake the doing of it in our own strength; for the history of the people of Israel is, whether in its largeness or details, but the history of our hearts.

Exodus 19. Here was an immense change taking place in the state of Israel: until then the promise made to them had been unconditional. If you cast your eyes over the chapters from 15 to 19 you will find that God had given them all things gratuitously, and even in spite of their murmurings; as the manna, water to drink, the sabbath, etc.; and that He had sustained them in their combat with Amalek at Rephidim. He recalls all this to their memory: "Ye have seen," says He to them, "how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself; now therefore, if …" This is the first time, in the relationship between God and Israel, that the little word if is introduced. "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

But the moment a condition comes in, our ruin is certain, for we fail the first day; and this was the

foolishness of Israel. In vain God gives His law, which is "holy, and just, and good." To a sinner His law is death, because he is a sinner; and from the moment that God gives His law conditionally—namely, that something is to come to us by keeping it—He gives it, not because we can obey it, but to make us more clearly comprehend that we are lost because we have violated it.

The Israelites should have said, It is true, most gracious God, we ought to obey Thee; but we have failed so often, that we dare not receive the promises under such a condition. Instead of this, what was their language? "All the words that the Lord hath said, will we do." They bind themselves to fulfil all that Jehovah had spoken; they take the promises under the condition of perfect obedience. What is the consequence of such rashness? The golden calf was made before Moses had come down from the mount. When we sinners engage ourselves to obey God without any failure (although obedience is always a duty), and to forfeit the blessing if we do not, we are sure to fail. Our answer should always be, "We are lost"; for grace supposes our ruin. It is this entire instability of man under any condition, that the apostle wishes to shew (Gal. 3:17-21) when he says, "A mediator is not a mediator of one." That is, from the instant there is a mediator, there are two parties. But God is not two; "God is one." And who is the other party? It is man. Hence the accomplishment depends on the stability of man, as well as of God; and all comes to nothing.

There being nothing stable in man, he has of course sunk under the weight of his engagements; and this is what must always happen. But the law cannot annul the promises made to Abraham; the law, which was 430 years after, cannot abolish the promise; and the promise

was made to Abraham, not only of a blessing to the nations, but also of the land, and of earthly blessings to Israel. The reasoning of the apostle, as to spiritual promises, applies equally to temporal promises made to the Jews. We see that Israel could not enjoy them under the law. In fact, all was lost as soon as the golden calf was made. Yet the covenant at Sinai was founded on the principle of obedience. Exodus 24:7: “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood…” Here is a covenant ratified by blood—and upon this foundation— “We will do all that the Lord hath said.” You know that the people made the golden calf, and that Moses in consequence destroyed the tables of the law.

In Exodus 32 we see how the promises made before the law were the resource of faith. It was this which sustained the people by the intercession of Moses, even in ruin itself: and by means of a mediator, God returned to man after his failure (v. 9, 10). “It is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.” Then Moses besought the Lord: “Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.” Thus, after the fall of Israel, Moses beseeches God, for His

own glory, to remember the promises made to Abraham; and God repents of the evil which He had thought to do.

Turn to Leviticus 26. This chapter is the threat of all the chastisements which were to follow the unfaithfulness of Israel. Verse 42: “Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham; … and I will remember the land.”205 God returns to His promises made unconditionally long before the law; and this is applicable to the last time, as we shall presently see.

There are two more covenants made with Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness. That under the law having been broken, the intercession of Moses made way for another (Exodus 33:14, 19), of which we have the basis in Exodus 34:27: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.” Observe, with thee; for there is a remarkable change in the language of God. In Egypt, God had always said, “My people, my people.” But when the golden calf was made, He uses the word which they had used— “Thy people which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt”; for Israel had said, “This Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt,” Exodus 32:1. God takes them up in their own words. What happened? Moses interceded, and, so to speak, he would not permit God to say, “Thy people,” as of him; but he insisted upon Thy people, as of God’s people.

Now then, it is a covenant made with Moses, as mediator. Here comes in the sovereignty of grace, introduced indeed when all was lost (the condition of the law having been violated). If God had not been

sovereign, what would have been the consequence of this infraction? The destruction of all the people. That is, though the sovereignty of God is eternal, it is revealed when it becomes the only resource of a people lost by their own ways: and this sovereignty manifests itself through the means of a mediator.

There is still another covenant in Deuteronomy 29:1: “These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.” And the subject of this third covenant with the Israelites is this: God makes it with them, in order that under it they, being obedient, might be able to continue to enjoy the land. They did not keep it, and so they were expelled the territory. They were installed in it at the epoch of this third covenant, and by the keeping of it they would have been maintained there. See verses 9, 12, 19.

Thus we get the principle on which they entered at all into the land of Canaan. But we have also seen that before the law God had promised them the land for a perpetual possession, by covenants and promises made without condition; and it is owing to these promises, by the mediation of Moses, that Israel was spared, and at last enjoyed the land—enjoyed it, we say, on the terms of the third covenant, made in the plains of Moab.

After the fall of the Israelites in this promised land, there remains still to be applied to them, as to their re-establishment, all the promises made to Abraham. After this people had failed in every possible way towards God, the prophets shew us clearly, that God has promised again to restore them and to establish them in

their land, under the Lord Jesus Christ as their king, to receive in Him the full accomplishment of every temporal promise.

Let us recollect, dear friends, that all we have been going through is the revelation of the character of Jehovah; and that, though truly these things have happened to Israel, they have happened to them on the part of God; and that they are, as a consequence, the manifestation of the character of God in Israel for us. It is not only of the failure of Israel that we are to think, but of the goodness of God—our God. Israel is the theatre upon which God has displayed all His character; but not alone is Israel to be considered: the glory of God and the honour of His perfections are concerned. If God could fail in His gifts towards Israel, He could fail in His gifts towards us. We shall have yet, on another occasion, to continue our account of this people.

Lecture 9 Read Ezekiel 37.

Israel's Failure And Dispersion; Promises Of Restoration That which happens to the dry bones seen by Ezekiel exhibits, very forcibly, the matter to be treated of this evening; namely, what God in His goodness will yet do in favour of Israel. We shall follow our usual method of giving a succession of passages out of the word of God upon it. You remember, that in commencing this subject, we remarked the difference between the covenant made with Abraham, and the covenant of the law given on Mount Sinai; and that whenever God was going to shew grace to His people, He called to mind the covenant made with Abraham. We also remarked that Israel took the promises under the covenant made in the wilderness, and not under that made with Abraham; and

that, from that time Israel, being put under the condition of obedience in order to persevere in the enjoyment of the promises, failed altogether; but that, notwithstanding, thanks to the mediation of Moses, God was able to bless the people.

We shall have to see how Israel failed again after that, even when established in the land which the Lord had given to them; and that God raised up prophets, in a way altogether apart from His necessary dealings with them, to convict them of the sin into which they had fallen, and to shew the faithful ones that the counsels of God towards Israel would not be put aside; for that, by means of the Messiah, He would accomplish all that which He had spoken. We shall see also, that it was just when Israel would fail, that these promises of their re-establishment would become precious to the faithful remnant of the people.

Let us remember that in the history of the sin of Israel under the law, we have the history of every heart among us; that if we place ourselves before God, we shall recognise that it is only the grace which is known to us by the work of God, which can not only sustain us in but relieve us from, the situation in which we find ourselves in consequence of sin.

I am going to look through the decline and ruin of Israel under every form of its government, from the time of the entry into the land of Canaan. It was Joshua who led them. The book of this name is the history of the victories of Israel over the Canaanites—the history of the faithfulness of God in the accomplishment of all that He had promised to His people. The Judges and Samuel are the history of the failure of Israel in the land of

Canaan until David; but, at the same time, of the patience of God. First, then, how does Joshua describe the Israelites—their condition and character?

In chapter 24 he recites all that God had done on their behalf—all His favours, and all His goodness; upon which (v. 16) the people answer, “God forbid that we should forsake the Lord.” In verse 19, Joshua says to the people, “Ye cannot serve the Lord”; and the people say, “Nay, but we will serve the Lord”; “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.” “So [v. 25] Joshua made a covenant with the people that day.” This captain of their salvation led them into the land of promise; they enjoy the fruits of grace, and they anew undertake to obey the Lord.

In Judges 2 they are found in complete failure, and in consequence God says, “I will not drive out your enemies from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides.” Verses 11, 14: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.” It is always the same picture— kindness on the part of God, ingratitude on that of man.

Let us now turn to some passages which detail the transgressions of Israel under every form of government. 1 Samuel 4:11. Eli was the high priest, the judge and head of Israel, yet was the glory of Israel cast down to the ground: “the ark of God taken, and the two sons of Eh, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.” Verses 18,21. Eli himself died, and his daughter-in-law named the child which was born of her, Ichabod, saving, “The glory is departed from Israel (because the ark of God

was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband).”

After this, God, who raised up Samuel, the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24; chap. 13:20), governs Israel by him; but Israel soon rejected him; 1 Sam. 8:6, 7. “And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them, according to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day.” It was then that God “gave them a king in his anger”; and we know what befell the king of their choice; 1 Sam. 15:26. The judgment is pronounced; Samuel says to Saul, “I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.” These extracts are sufficient for our purpose. Israel has failed under king, prophet, and priest. They are ruined under the king whom they had chosen.

David is raised up in the place of Saul: God made this choice in His dealings in grace. David—type of Christ, as he is the father of Christ according to the flesh—was His gift to Israel. Thus it is solely by the goodness of God, that Israel becomes rich and glorious under David and Solomon. But still this people transgressed afresh under these two princes;

1 Kings 11:9, 11. “And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel.”206 It is an unhappy subject to dwell on—this constant distaste of man’s heart for God, under every condition in which he is placed; and this is the instruction which we ought to draw from the history of

the children of Israel. They subsequently divided themselves into two distinct parts, and the ten tribes became altogether unfaithful. It was in the person of Ahaz that the family of David, the last human stay of the hopes of Israel (for after its fall nothing but God's promises remained), began to become idolaters; 2 Kings 16:10, 14. The sin of Manasseh put the finishing stroke to all their misconduct; 2 Kings 21:1, 14.

Such, in a few words, was the behaviour of Israel, and even of Judah, until the captivity of Babylon. The Spirit of God sums up the history of their crimes, and of His patience, in this impressive language (2 Chron. 36:15, 16): "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." This was the end of their existence in the land of Canaan, into which they had been introduced by Joshua. The name of Lo-ammi (not my people) is at last written upon them. Having thus rapidly run through the history of their fall until their deportation to Babylon, let us consider the promises which sustained a faithful remnant among them during this prevalence of iniquity, and during the captivity of the nation.

There is a prominent one to be noted, which served as a kind of pedestal, on which the faithful Jews might build their expectations. It is to be found in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. Between the two there is this difference: in 1 Chronicles 17 the application is made directly to Christ, which is not quite so plainly seen in 2 Samuel 7; and this distinction holds good as to the matter of the

books themselves, of which the one (Samuel) is historical, and the other (the Chronicles) a brief synopsis or resume, which connects all the history genealogically from Adam to Christ, and to the hopes of Israel; and from which book, consequently, all the transgressions and falls of the kings of Israel are excluded. Compare 2 Samuel 7:14 with 1 Chronicles 17:13. This is the promise (2 Sam. 7:10), “Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as beforetime.” 1 Chronicles 17:11-13: “And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” In Hebrews 1:5 application is made of these words to Christ; that is, all the promises made to Abraham and to his seed—all the promises made to Israel—are placed in the safe keeping, and gathered together in the Person, of the Son of David.

We have now, dear friends, seen the promise made to David, which is the foundation of all those which concern the family of that name. We have seen the failure of the people, and also the promise made to the Son of David—to the Messiah. Let us pursue the study from the direct testimony of the prophets. Isaiah 1:25-28 decrees the full restoration of the Jews; but by judgments which cut off the wicked.

Isaiah 4:2-4. “In that day (time of great trouble) shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them

that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Chapter 6 of the same book gives us full entrance into the spirit of prophecy. It was at the moment when Ahaz came to the throne—the same Ahaz who sent the heathen altar from Damascus to Jerusalem —that Isaiah is sent to meet this king, the son of David, who introduced apostasy. The first thing we have presented to us is the manifested glory of Christ, the Lord thrice holy (we have the interpretation of John as to this, in chapter 12 of his gospel); that glory which condemns the entire nation; but which produces, by grace, the spirit of intercession, to which the mercy which re-establishes the nation is the answer—mercy, notwithstanding, which finds no accomplishment, until the wicked are got rid of from the people and the land, after a state of prolonged hardening on their part carried to its utmost height, in the rejection of Jesus Christ and of the testimony given to Him by the Spirit in the apostles. Read Isaiah 6:9-13.

Isaiah 11:10: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse … to it shall the Gentiles seek." Here we learn how and when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord; it is after He has slain the wicked "by the breath of his lips." Then "the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people." Read verses 9-12.

Isaiah 33:20, 24; chap. 49. It has been asserted, that in these chapters, Zion means the church; but when all the joy is come, “Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me.” Impossible, if Zion be the church. What! the church forsaken in the midst of its joy?207 Read Isaiah 49:14-23; also chapter 62, which likewise applies to Israel; also chapter 65:10-25, where there can be no question, but of earthly blessings—such as are hitherto unknown on earth. In that day God Himself will rejoice over Jerusalem.

These are some of the promises which plainly announce the forthcoming glory of the Jewish people and of Jerusalem. But there are others still more direct. Jeremiah 3:16-18: “It shall come to pass when ye be multiplied,” etc. Certain fore-shadowings have happened, which have looked like the accomplishment of many of the prophecies relating to their restoration; as, for example, the return of the people from Babylon; but God has given His own marks; He has linked circumstances together which have never yet had their fulfilment; as, in this passage, “All the nations shall be gathered unto it.” It is certain that this did not take place at the return from Babylon. But you will reply, It is the church. No; for “in those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together … to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.” We see, in a word, three things happening together, which most surely have not had as yet a simultaneous accomplishment: namely, Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; Judah and Israel united; and the nations assembled to the throne of God. When the church was founded, Israel was dispersed;

when Israel returned from Babylon, there was neither church nor assemblage of nations.

Jeremiah 30:7-11. “It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it… and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him; but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king… and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.” These happy times for Israel have assuredly not yet been realised.

Chapter 31:23, 27, 28, 31, unto the end. Remark verse 28. Who is it that the Lord has broken down, thrown down, and destroyed? The same that He will build and plant. It is a little unreasonable to apply all the judgments to Israel, and all the blessings which concern the same persons to the church. And if the church be indeed here spoken of, what is the meaning of “from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner,” “the hill Gareb,” etc.? Observe, also, the last words of the chapter: “It shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more for ever.”

Chapter 32:37-42. Touching passage as to the thoughts of the Lord concerning His people! After having given them promises of blessings in grace, and assured them that He would be their God, the Lord says, “And I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.”

Jeremiah 33:6-11, 15, 25, 26. This is again the blessing of Israel—of Jerusalem: and that by the presence of the Branch, which shall grow up unto David, who shall execute judgment and righteousness, in the land. Let us

remember, dear friends, that the word of God in no way presents to us the Holy Spirit as the Branch of David, nor His office as that of executing judgment upon the earth. On the other hand if you insist upon this chapter applying to the restoration from Babylon, I would quote Nehemiah 9:36, 37: “Behold, we are servants this day … and we are in great distress,” as shewing how little the return from Babylon was the fulfilment of all these promises we have been reading. Was that restoration the whole heart and the whole soul of God in favour of His people? We have seen the estimation in which the Spirit of God held that event. No: these promises of God were not at that time accomplished. Ezek. 11:16-20. Until this day, Israel, or rather the Jews, are under the judgment which the first part of this passage imports. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none,” Matt. 12:43. The closing verses speak of their last state, in which they are subjected to judgment; and at that time (v. 19) God gives a new heart to the remnant, the nucleus of the future nation.

In Ezekiel 34:22 to the end of the chapter we have David their king in the midst of them, and their blessings immovable.

Ezekiel 36:22-32. If you make the objection, These are spiritual things in which we participate, I answer, Yes, we participate in the blessings of the good olive-tree; but our joy has not dispossessed the Jew (the natural branch) of that which belongs to him. Why are we made partakers? Because we are grafted into Christ. If we are Christ’s, we are Abraham’s children, and partake of all that is spiritual. “Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to

your fathers," v. 28. The church has only one Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would now remark, for a moment in passing on our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus (John 3 particularly verse 12), where there is an allusion to "earthly things." Previously (v. 10) He had said, "Art thou a master [teacher] in Israel, and knowest not these things? "— namely, the need of being born of water and of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God. This knowledge was to be got out of the Old Testament, the source whence the teachers drew their instruction. The passage just quoted out of Ezekiel contains almost the very same words used by our Lord. How! says He, you a master [teacher] in Israel! you ought to understand that Israel must have a new and purified heart in order to enjoy the promises. How is it that you know not these things? If you enter not into My saying that you must be born of water and of the Spirit, and do not understand these earthly things, how can it be expected that you should believe about heavenly things? As if He had said, If I have spoken to you of the things which apply to Israel, if I have told you that Israel must be born again to enjoy those terrestrial promises which belong to her, and you have not understood Me, how will you comprehend about heavenly things—about the glory of Christ exalted in heaven, and the church, His companion, in this heavenly glory? You have not even understood the doctrines of your prophets. You a teacher in Israel! you should at least have made yourself acquainted with the earthly things, of which Ezekiel and others have spoken.

In this chapter of Ezekiel, as in many others, expressions are found, such as "fruit of trees"— "increase of the field"— details of earthly things, which are the earthly

blessings promised to Israel; whilst, at the same time, the necessity of a new heart is connected with them, in order that those to whom these promises belong may be able to enjoy them. Israel must be renewed in heart to receive the promises of Canaan. God must cause them to walk in His statutes by giving them a new heart, and then, but only then, they will enjoy the blessings foretold for them.

Ezekiel 37 gives a detailed history of the re-establishment of Israel—the joining together of the two parts of the nation, their return into the land, and their state of unity and fidelity to God in this same land; God being their God, and David their king being present—present for ever, in such a way as that the nations shall know that their God is the Lord, when His sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Ezekiel 39:22-25. It is evident that the time here mentioned is not yet come; since, when it does, God "will not hide his face any more from them," as He is doing at the present time, and that He will gather them "unto their own land," and will leave none of them among the heathen.

In conclusion, let us call to mind the great principles upon which these prophecies rest. The restoration of the Jews is founded upon the promises made to Abraham without condition; their fall is the result of their having undertaken to act in their own strength. After having exercised the patience of God in every possible way "until there was no remedy," judgment is come upon them; but God reverts to His promises. Let us make a proper application of this to our own hearts. The same history is ours—always that of the fall. No sooner has

God placed us in such or such a position than we immediately fail in it. But there is behind our failure a principle of strength, that is to say, the revelation of the counsels of God, and, by consequence, unconditional promises; and we have seen (in Moses as the type), that it is the mediation and the presence of Jesus which is the accomplishment of these promises. We have also seen that God executes judgment only after extraordinary patience, after having used every possible means (however long that judgment may have been pronounced) to recall man to a sense of his duty, if there had been a spark of life in his heart; but there was none. Individuals, quickened by grace, hold to the promises which will have their fulfilment in the manifestation of Him who can realise them, and merit the realisation for others. And nothing puts these principles in clearer relief than the history of Israel: “All these things happened unto them for types (see margin), and they are written for our admonition.” It is like a mirror, in which we can see, on the one hand, the heart of man, which fails always, and on the other, the faithfulness of God who never fails, who will fulfil all His promises, and who will put forth a strength able to surmount all the wickedness of man, and the power of Satan. It is when the enmity has arrived at its height, that He says, “Make the heart of this people fat” (Isaiah 6:10): but it is not until nearly eight hundred years after (Acts 28:27), that we find the accomplishment of this judgment pronounced so long before by the prophet. It was when the people had rejected everything, that God hardened them, to make them a monument of His ways. What patience on the part of God!

And so in that which concerns us Gentiles—the execution of the judgment has been suspended for eighteen centuries, and God is still drawing upon all the eternal resources of His grace to try if there be any who will listen to His testimony of salvation. As the Lord said (John 15:22, 24), “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” Admirable patience! Infinite grace of Him who interests Himself in us, even after our rebellion and iniquity! To Him be all the glory!

Lecture 10 Read Isaiah 1.

Same Subject As The Preceding, And Manner Of Its Accomplishment Some passages of Scripture upon the destiny of the Jews, which at our last meeting there was not time to quote, will terminate our sketch of historical prophecy concerning this people; I say historical, because prophecy is the history which God has given us of futurity.

I would again remind you of that important fact, that Jewish history is especially the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. To ask, In what does this history concern us? is to say, Of what use is it that I should know what my Father is about to do for my brethren and the manifestation of His character in His acts?

It is evident, from the place which the subject occupies in His word, that their affairs are very dear to our God and Father, if they be not to us. It is in this people, by the ways of God revealed to them, that the character of

Jehovah is fully revealed, that the nations will know Jehovah, and that we shall ourselves learn to know Him.

The same person may be king of a country, and father of a family; and this is the difference between God's actings towards us and the Jews. Towards the church, it is the character of Father; towards the Jews, it is the character of Jehovah, the King. His faithfulness, unchangeableness, His almighty power, His government of the whole earth—all this is revealed in His relationship towards Israel; it is in this way that the history of this people lets us into the character of Jehovah.

Psalm 126. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion … then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." See, on the same subject, Ezekiel 39:6, 7: "And I will send a fire on Magog, on them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the Lord. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord [Jehovah], the Holy One in Israel." Verse 28: "Then shall they know that I am the Lord [Jehovah] their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there." This is the way in which Jehovah reveals Himself. The Father reveals Himself to our souls by the gospel, by the spirit of adoption; but Jehovah makes Himself known by His judgments—by the exercise of His power on the earth. I have said, that the Father reveals Himself by the gospel, because the gospel is a system of pure grace—a system which teaches us to act towards others on the principle of pure grace, as we

have been acted on by the Father. It is not “eye for eye, tooth for tooth”; it is not what justice requires, the law of retaliation, or equity; but a principle according to which I ought to “be perfect, as my Father is perfect.” But it will not be mere grace that is suffering evil and doing good, in the government of Jehovah. Jehovah, without doubt, will bless the nations; but the character of His kingdom is, that “judgment shall return unto righteousness,” Psalm 94:15. At the first coming of Jesus Christ, judgment was with Pilate, and righteousness with Jesus; but when Jesus shall return, judgment shall be united to righteousness. The people of Christ now, the children of God, ought to follow the example of the Saviour (that is, not expect or wish that judgment should be in the rigour of righteousness; but they should be gentle and humble in the midst of all the wrongs which they suffer on the part of man). United to Christ, they are indemnified for all their wrongs in the strength of His intimate love, which comforts them by the consolations of the presence of His Spirit; and, more than this, by the hopes of the heavenly glory. On the other hand, Jehovah will console His people by the direct acting of His righteousness in their favour (see Psalm 6$:5), and by reestablishing them in earthly glory. The Jews, then, are the people by whom, and in whom, God sustains His name of Jehovah, and His character of judgment and righteousness. The church are the people in whom, as in His family, the Father reveals His character of goodness and love.

We have already touched upon the events which will happen to the Jews in the last time, by the quotations from Jeremiah, chapters 30 to 33; and from Ezekiel 36 to

39. I will now cite a few other passages to the same effect, following the order of the prophets.

Daniel 12:1 … it is the presence of him who will act for the people of Daniel, that is, for the Jewish people.

There are a few remarkable traits in this prophecy. First, God in His power, by the ministry of Michael, is to stand up for the children of Daniel's people; and it is to be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. In this we have a clue to Matthew 24 and Mark 13:19.

The resurrection (Dan. 12:2) applies to the Jews. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." You find the same expression in Isaiah 26: "Thy dead shall live;…" and in Ezekiel 37:12. It is a figurative resurrection of the people, buried as a nation among the Gentiles. In this revival it is said of those who rise, "Some to shame and everlasting contempt." This is what will happen to the Jews. Of those brought out from among the nations, some shall enjoy eternal life, but some shall be subject to shame and everlasting contempt; Isaiah 66:24. At the time of the accomplishment of this prophecy all of Daniel's people are not brought up from among the nations. In a word, on the one hand, God standing up for His people in a time of distress; and, on the other, a remnant delivered —such is a summary of Daniel 12.

In Hosea 2:14 unto the end, we see that the Lord will receive Israel, will bring her into the land, after having humbled her, but having spoken to her also after His own heart, and will make her such as she was in the days of her youth; that Jehovah will make a covenant

with her, and bless her in every kind of way on this earth, and will betroth her unto Himself for ever.

But more. There is an uninterrupted chain of blessings from Jehovah Himself, down to the earthly blessings poured out in abundance upon Israel, who is the seed of God (for this is the force of the word 'Jezreel'). On this account there is added (v. 23), "I will sow her unto me in the earth." For Israel will become the instrument of blessing to the earth, as life from amongst the dead. At this time all is hindered by sin; spiritual wickedness is now "in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12); and every description of misery abounds, accompanied though it be with many blessings (for God makes "all things work together for good to them that love him"); but at that time there will be a fulness of earthly blessing.

Hosea 3:4, 5. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." They shall have neither the true God nor a false god (so it is with them now); but after that they shall seek Jehovah and David—the well-beloved, or Christ.

Joel 3:1, 16-18, 20, 21. After having spoken of the nations at the time of the return of His people from captivity (v. 1-15), and the judgments exercised upon the Gentiles, God speaks in the latter verses of the Jews. Jerusalem is to be holy; Jehovah will dwell in Zion; He will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the

children of Israel. This will be their case when the judgment of God shall fall upon the nations.

Amos 9:14, 15. “And I will bring again the captivity of my people … and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up.” This is not yet accomplished. Verses n, 12, of this chapter, are quoted in Acts 15, not for the purpose of shewing that the prophecy had then come to pass; but to prove that God had all along determined upon having a people from out of the Gentiles; and that, therefore, the language of the prophets agreed with that which Simon Peter had been relating of what God had done in his days. It is not the accomplishment of a prophecy, but the establishing of a principle by the mouth of the prophets, as well as by the word of the Spirit through Simon Peter.

Micah 4:1-8. Nor is this yet brought to pass. It is, so to speak, a topographical description of Jerusalem, when her first dominion is restored. In chapter 5:4, 7, 8, the name of Christ is respected and great to the ends of the earth, Israel everywhere the dew of divine blessing, and coming off victorious against all who oppose her. With regard to Micah, you will remark (as was observed in a former lecture) how, in chapter 7:19, 20, the Spirit adverts to the promises made to the fathers without condition.

Zephaniah 3:12, to the end. What language is this? God is said to be “silent [see margin] in his love “; He is so moved that He is “silent.” On whom does he lavish all this? Read verse 13: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and He

down, and none shall make them afraid." Jehovah is in the midst of them, and nothing can disturb them.

Zechariah 1:15, 17-21. Mention is here made of the four monarchies who scattered Israel, as themselves scattered by the force of the judgments of God. Chapter 9:9, to the end. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee…." This, you will assert, is already accomplished. No; only in part. The Holy Spirit, in the New Testament (John 12:15), cites this passage; but with the omission of the words "He is just, and having salvation" (saving himself, margin). Jesus, in fact, cared not for Himself. When they said to Him, mocking Him, "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross," He took no notice. He hid not Himself from grief: far from saving Himself, He saved us; He spared not Himself that we might be spared. Chapter 10:6, unto the end. When was it that Israel had been as "though the Lord had not cast them off?" Never.

Let us now turn to some passages which will shew that, though the people of Israel will be restored in their land, there will only be a remnant saved. Zechariah 12:2 mentions a time of war, even of all the people round about, the people of the earth, against Jerusalem: but God will defend the city and its inhabitants in a miraculous manner, and the nations will be destroyed (v. 9). The spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out upon the remnant of Israel— "all the families that remain"; and "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn."

Isaiah 18. Whatever critical difficulties exist in this chapter, its great object is too evident to be obscured by

any rendering whatever. The rivers of Cush are the Nile and Euphrates.208 The enemies of Israel, in the biblical part of their history, were situated on these two rivers. There is, in this prophecy, a call made to a country which is beyond them, to a distant land, which had never, at the time of the prophecy, come into association with Israel. The prophet has then in his view some country which would later come upon the scene. Verse 3: God bids all the inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, to take cognisance. The nations are to have their eyes upon Israel; they are summoned by God to pay attention to what was taking place as to Jerusalem; they are all interested in her fate. The world is invited to watch the judgments about to take place. In the meanwhile (v. 4), God takes His rest, and lets the nations act of themselves: Israel has returned into her land (v. 5, 6).

It is a description of Israel returning into Judea by the help of some nation at a distance from the scene itself, which is neither Babylon or Egypt, nor other nations who meddled in their affairs of old. We say not that it is France, or Russia, or England. The Israelites return to their land, but God takes no notice of them. Israel is abandoned to the nations; and when everything would appear as if it were going to bear fruit (v. 5) anew, behold the sprigs and branches cut down, and left to the fowls of the air to summer on, and to the beasts of the field to winter on (which terms are designations of the Gentiles). Nevertheless, at that time a present of this people shall be brought to the Lord of hosts, and from this people “to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.”

Psalm 126:4. “Turn again our captivity, O Lord.” Zion and Judah will be first brought back. The captives of Zion were already brought back when this prayer was presented to God (v. 1); they are but the earnest of what God will do in the restoration of all Israel.

But it is fitting, here, to touch on the manner of God’s dealing with the houses of Judah and Israel in their judgment and dispersion. The first to be gathered are those who rejected Jesus, those who were guilty of His death. The ten tribes, as such, were not guilty of this crime; the ten tribes were dispersed before the introduction of the four monarchies into the rule of the world. It was the Assyrians who led captive the ten tribes, before Babylon had existence as an empire. A circumstance relating to a Jewish family or tribe (Jer. 35:1-10), found living in the midst of the Arabs, is related of Mr. Wolff, who visited it of late years. These Jews say of themselves, that they are descended from some who refused to return to Judea with Ezra, because they knew that those who returned with Ezra would put the Messiah to death; and for this reason they remained where they were. Even though this be false, the existence of such a tradition is not a little wonderful. One thing is evident that those who rejected the Christ will be subjected to the Antichrist; they will make “a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell” (Isa. 28:15); but their covenant will destroy all their hopes; having united themselves to Antichrist, they will undergo the consequence of this alliance, and at last will be destroyed. Two thirds of the inhabitants will be cut off in the country of Israel itself after their return; Zech. 13:8, 9.

But with the ten tribes the occurrences are different, as we know from Ezekiel 20:32-39. Instead of two parts cut off in the land, the rebels—that is, the disobedient and rebellious ones among them—will not enter at all into Canaan. God does with them, as He did with Israel upon their rebellion after their coming out from Egypt; He destroys them without their even seeing it.

Thus there are two classes, so to speak, of Jews, in this return. First, the Jewish nation, properly speaking—namely, Judah, and those allied with her in the rejection of the true Christ: they will be in connection with the Antichrist, and of them two thirds will be cut off in the land. Secondly, those of the ten tribes coming up, of whom some will be cut off in the wilderness on their way into the land.

Matthew 23:37-39. This prediction, delivered by Jesus Himself, gives us the assurance of the coming of Christ to restore Israel, and reign in her midst: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, … your house is left unto you desolate … till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Israel will see Jesus, but it will be when this word of Psalm 118:26 shall go out of her mouth. The psalm itself gives a happy picture of her joy at that time; and out of it the Saviour drew the announcement of the judgment which He pronounced against the Jewish rulers upon their rejection of Him: “The stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner.” Out of this psalm, also, is drawn the joyful salutation with which the little children welcomed Him in the temple with Hosannahs—fit precursors of those who, in happier times yet to come, will receive the hearts of little

children, and will confess that Saviour formerly rejected by their fathers! It is this psalm which celebrates the exaltation and blessing of Israel—that blessing due to the faithfulness of Jehovah alone, whilst it points out the sin of the nation in rejecting “the stone “which was to become the foundation of God in Zion; but which was also, by the unbelief of that nation, the “stone of stumbling” and of judgment.

Besides these two classes of Israelites who will return by providential agency, but still of their own free accord, the Lord after His appearance will gather together from among the Gentiles the elect of the Jewish nation, who will be yet among the nations; and this return will be accompanied with great blessing. (See Matthew 24:31; compare Isaiah 27:12, 13, and chap. 11:10, 12.)

We subjoin two principles, very simple and clear, which distinguish all preceding blessings (as, for instance, the return from Babylon) from the accomplishment of the prophecies of which we have been speaking.

These two principles are: firstly, That the blessings flow from the presence of Christ, Son of David. Secondly, That they are a consequence of the new covenant. Neither one nor the other of these conditions was fulfilled at the return from Babylon, nor has it been since. The gospel does not occupy itself with the earthly blessings of the Jews, which is the matter of these prophecies.

Lecture 11 Read Revelation 12.

Summing Up, And Conclusion

I have read this chapter, not as professing to explain it in detail, but because it gives a summary of that which

will happen at the close of this dispensation, at least the heavenly sources of these events, and the woes of the earth.209 My object this evening is to take up, in their order, the prophetic events which have been occupying us, as far as God shall give me ability.

But, beforehand, dear friends, it will not be amiss to return to a few of the thoughts which were given out at the very beginning of these lectures. Let us be reminded, in treating of these subjects, of their great end—a double one. One end is that of detaching us from the world, to which (though indeed the effect of every part of the word, when the Spirit of God is applying it) prophecy is peculiarly adapted; its tendency must be to "deliver us from this present evil age." The other end is to make us intelligent of the character of God, and of His ways towards us. These are two precious and wholesome fruits, which spring from the acquirement of the knowledge of prophecy.

Many are the objections made to its study; it is thus that Satan always acts against the truth. I do not mean objections against such or such a view, but against the study of prophecy itself. And Satan works in this way as to the entire word of God. To one he says, Follow morality, and do not meddle with dogmas, because he knows that dogmas will free a man from his power, by the revelation of Jesus, and of the truth in their hearts. To another he suggests the neglecting of prophecy, because in it is found the judgment of this world, of which he is prince. But to allow weight to such objections, is it not to find fault with God, who has given prophecy to us, and who has even attached a particular blessing to the reading of the part reputed the most difficult? Prophecy throws a great light upon the

dispensations of God; and, in this sense, it does much as regards the freedom of our souls towards Him. For what hinders it more than the error so often committed, of confounding the law and the gospel, the past economies or dispensations with the existing one?

If, in our internal fighting, we find ourselves in the presence of the law, it is impossible to find peace; and yet if we insist on the difference which exists between the position of the saints of old, and that of the saints during the actual dispensation, this again troubles the minds of many. Now the study of prophecy clears up such points, and at the same time enlightens the faithful as to their walk and conversation; for, whilst it always maintains free salvation by the death of Jesus, prophecy enables us to understand this entire difference between the standing of the saints now and formerly, and lights up with all the counsels of God the road along which His own people have been conducted, whether before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Again, dear friends, as we have before said, it is always the hope which is presented to us which acts upon our hearts and affections. There are thus always enjoyments in prospect which stamp their actual character upon our souls. That which occupies the heart of man as hope makes the rule of his conduct. Of what vast importance is it not, then, to have our souls filled with hopes according to God! Persons say it is the idle curiosity of prying into hidden things; but if it were true that we ought not to look into prophecy, the conclusion is inevitable, that our thoughts are not to go beyond the present. The way of knowing what God’s intentions are for the future is certainly the study of that prophecy which He has given to us. Prophecy records things to

come; it is the scriptural mirror, wherein future events are seen. If we refuse the study of what God has revealed as to come, we are necessarily left to our own ideas upon it.

The famous passage of Paul has been quoted to some here (1 Cor. 2:2): “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” It is constantly used as an objection against the study of what is found revealed in the word. This arises from two causes. The one is due to that prolific source of error, namely, the citation of a passage without examining the context; the other, alas! arises from a greater or less want of uprightness—from a desire (unrecognised, it may be, in our own deceitful hearts) of standing still in the ways of the Lord, by making as little acquaintance with them as may be. It is not true that we are to limit ourselves to the knowledge of Jesus Christ crucified. We must also know Jesus Christ glorified, Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; we must know Him as High Priest; as Advocate with the Father. We ought to know Jesus Christ as much as possible, and not be content with saying, “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” So to say is to take the letter of the word and abuse it. The apostle, seeing the tendency that there was in the church at Corinth to follow rather the learning and philosophy of man than Christ (a thing not to be wondered at in a city renowned for science), points out, in leading their souls back to Christ, how foreign his entry among them was from earthly wisdom. He “was with them in weakness and fear; his speech and his preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom”; “he determined not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified”—Jesus Christ, and even Christ as the despised

one among men. He is not speaking of the value of the blood, but of the condition of Christ Himself, in order to bring down, by the cross, all their vain glory, and found their faith upon the word of God, and not on human wisdom. But in the same chapter he says, that from the moment he comes into the midst of true Christians, his conduct changes; he speaks “wisdom among them that are perfect.” He would have nothing to do with human wisdom; but as soon as he finds himself among the perfect ones, he says, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” Desiring to confine ourselves to Jesus crucified, in the way it is urged, is, I repeat, to confine ourselves to as little as possible of Christianity. In Hebrews 6 the apostle says, he is unwilling to do what they would make him say in this place; he altogether condemns that which is urged upon us. “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” says he, “let us go on unto perfection.” After these observations on the study of prophecy in general, I proceed to recall, in a few words, how God has revealed Himself by it.

Revelation 12 presents to us the great object of prophecy, and of all the word of God, that is, the combat which takes place between the last Adam and Satan. It is from this centre of truth that all the light which is found in Scripture radiates. This great combat may take place either for the earthly things (they being the object), and then it is in the Jews; or for the church (that being the object), and then it is in the heavenly places. It is on this account that the subject of prophecy divides itself into two parts: the hopes of the church, and those of the Jews; though the former be scarcely, properly speaking, prophecy, which concerns the earth and God’s government of it.

But before coming to this great crisis, namely the combat between Satan and the last Adam, it was necessary that the history of the first Adam should be developed. This has been done. And in order that the church, that is, Christians, may be in a position to occupy themselves with the things of God, it was needful, first of all, that they should be in happy certainty as to their own position before Him. At His first coming, Christ accomplished all the work which the wisdom of the Father, in the eternal counsels of God, had confided to Him; this effected the peace of the church. The Lord Jesus came, in order that the certainty of salvation, by the knowledge of the grace of God, should be introduced into the world, that is, into the hearts of the faithful. After having accomplished salvation, He communicates it to His followers in giving them life. His Holy Spirit, which is the seal of this salvation in the heart, reveals to them things to come, as to the children of the family and heirs of the family estate. During the period which separates the first coming of the Lord from the second, the church is gathered by the action of the Holy Spirit to have part in the glory of Christ at His return.

These, in a few words, are the two great subjects which I have been opening; namely, that Christ, having done all that is needful for the salvation of the church—having saved all those who believe, the Holy Ghost now acts in the world to communicate to the church the knowledge of this salvation. He does not come to propose the hope that God will be good, but a fact—that fact, once more, that Jesus has already accomplished the salvation of all those who believe; and when the Holy Spirit communicates this knowledge to a soul, it knows that it

is saved. Being then put in relationship with God as His children, we are His heirs, “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” All that concerns the glory of Christ belongs to us, and the Holy Spirit is given to us, in the first place, to make us understand that we are children of God. He is a Spirit of adoption, but more, a Spirit of light, who teaches the children of God what their inheritance is. As they are one with Christ, all the truth of His glory is revealed to them, and the supremacy which He has over all things, God having also constituted Him heir of all things, and us co-heirs.

After Christ has fulfilled all that was necessary, the church, until the second coming of its Saviour, is taken from out of all nations, and united to Him. It has, whilst here below, the knowledge of the salvation which He has accomplished, and of the coming glory, the Holy Spirit, in those who believe, being the seal of salvation accomplished, and the earnest of the future glory. These truths throw a great light upon the entire history of man. But let us ever remember that the great object of the Bible is the conflict between Christ, the last Adam, and Satan.

In what condition did Christ find the first Adam? In a condition into the lowest depths of which He was obliged to enter, as responsible head of all creation. He found man in state of ruin—entirely lost. It was needful that this should be unfolded before the coming of Christ; for God did not introduce His Son into the world as Saviour until all that was necessary to shew that man was in himself incapable of anything good was brought out. The whole state of man, before and after the deluge, under the law, under the prophets, only served as a clearer attestation that man was lost. He had failed

throughout, under every possible circumstance, until, God having sent His Son, the servants said, “This is the heir; let us kill him.” The measure of sin was then at its height; the grace of God then did also much more abound, and gave us the inheritance—us poor sinners, the inheritance with Christ in the heavenly glory, of which we possess the earnest, having Christ in spirit here below.

But (to enter a little more into the succession of dispensations, and also into that which concerns the character of God in this respect) the first thing which we would remark is the deluge, because until then there had not been, so to speak, government in the world. The prophecy which existed before the deluge was to this effect, that Christ was to come. The teachings of God were ever to this end: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.”

Let us pass on. In Noah’s time there was government of the earth, and God coming in judgment and committing the right of the sword to man. After this comes the call of Abraham. Mark: the principle of government is not put forward by the word, but the principle of promise, and the call to be in relationship with God, of that one person who becomes the root of all the promises of God —Abraham, the father of the faithful. God calls him, makes him quit his country, his family, bidding him go into a country which He would shew him. God reveals Himself to him as the God of promise, who separates a people to Himself by a promise which He gives them. It is at this epoch that God revealed Himself under the name of God Almighty.

After that, among the descendants of Abraham, by this same principle of election, God takes the children of Jacob to be His people here below—the object of all His earthly care, and out of whose midst Christ was to come according to the flesh. It is in this people of Israel that God displays all His characters as Jehovah; it is not only as a God of promise, but it is a God who unites the two principles of calling and government, which two had been each successively brought out in Noah and in Abraham. Israel was the called, separated people — separated indeed only to earthly blessings, and to enjoy the promise; but, at the same time, to be subject to the exercise of the government of God according to the law. We say then, that in Noah was marked the principle of government of the earth, and in Abraham that of calling and election; and so Jehovah will accomplish all that He has said as God of promise, “who was, and is, and is to come,” and govern all the earth, according to the righteousness of His law—the righteousness revealed in Israel.

We have shown that God (Exodus 19:4-9) made the accomplishment of the promises, in those times, to depend upon the faithfulness of man, and that He took occasion to prove him, and to represent in detail, as in a picture, all the characters under which He acted towards him. It was this which He was doing under priests, prophets, and kings. And it is to be particularly observed, that the bearing of prophecy, in the unfolding of this succession of relationships of God with Israel, and with man, is not alone the manifestation of the fall of man, but also, and chiefly, of the glory of God.

When Israel had transgressed in every possible way and circumstance, even in the family of David, which was the

last human resource of the nation—at the moment that family failed in Ahaz, prophecy commences in all its details, having these two features: one, the manifestation of the glory of Christ, in order fully to shew that the people had failed under the law; the other, the manifestation of the coming glory of Christ, to be the support of the faith of those who were desiring to keep the law, but who saw that everything was out of course. It is too late to take an interest in the prophecies when they are fulfilled. Those to whom at the actual time the prophets addressed themselves, were the people from whom submission was expected. The word of God should have touched their conscience. It ought to be so with us. In the midst of all this, however, were predictions which announced that the Messiah was to come, and to suffer for ends most important.

Prophecy applies itself properly to the earth; its object is not heaven. It was about things that were to happen on the earth; and the not seeing this has misled the church. We have thought that we ourselves had within us the accomplishment of these earthly blessings, whereas we are called to enjoy heavenly blessings. The privilege of the church is to have its portion in the heavenly places; and later blessings will be shed forth upon the earthly people. The church is something altogether apart—a kind of heavenly economy, during the rejection of the earthly people, who are put aside on account of their sins, and driven out among the nations, out of the midst of which nations God chooses a people for the enjoyment of heavenly glory with Jesus Himself. The Lord, having been rejected by the Jewish people, is become wholly a heavenly person. This is the doctrine which we peculiarly find in the writings of the apostle Paul. It is no

longer the Messiah of the Jews, but a Christ exalted, glorified; and it is for want of taking hold of this exhilarating truth, that the church has become so weak.

Having thus briefly retraced the history of the different dispensations, it remains for us now to see the church glorified, but without the Lord Jesus having abandoned any of His rights upon the earth. He was the Heir: He was to shed His blood, which was to ransom the inheritance. As Boaz said (whose name signifies, In him is strength), “What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance,” Ruth 4:5. So it was necessary that Christ should buy the church, co-heir by grace (as Boaz, type of Christ, bought the inheritance by taking to wife Ruth) to whom the inheritance had devolved in the decrees of Jehovah.210 Christ then, and the church, have title to the inheritance, that is, to all that Christ Himself has created as God. But what is the state of the church actually? Does it actually inherit these things? Not any; because until we are in the glory we can have nothing, possess nothing, except only “the Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Until that time Satan is the prince of this world, the god of this world; he accuses even the children of God in the heavenly places, which, however, he occupies only by usurpation (the way being made for him by the passions of men, and the power which he exercises over the creature, fallen, and at a distance from God, although, definitively, the providence of God uses all to the accomplishment of His counsels).

And now, dear friends, having contemplated the rights of Christ and of the church, let us consider how Christ will make them good. The consideration of this will lead us into the discovery, in their order, of the accomplishment of events at the close. Perhaps, however, having arrived thus far, it would be better (as I have only been speaking of the Jews) to turn for a moment to the Gentiles. We have remarked that, when the fall of the Jewish nation was complete, God transferred the right of government to the Gentiles; but with this difference, that this right was separated from the calling and the promise of God. In the Jews, the two things were united, namely, the calling of God, and government upon the earth, which became distinct things from the moment that Israel was put aside. In Noah and Abraham we had them distinct; government in the one, calling in the other.

With the Jews these principles were united; but Israel failed, and ceased thenceforward to be capable of manifesting the principle of the government of God, because God in Israel acted in righteousness; and unrighteous Israel could no longer be the depository of the power of God. God, then, quitted His terrestrial throne in Israel. Notwithstanding this, as to the earthly calling, Israel continued to be the called people: “for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” As to government, God transports it where He will; and it went to the Gentiles. There are, indeed, the called from among the nations (namely, the church), but it is for the heavens they are called. The calling of God for the earth is never transferred to the nations; it remains with the Jews. If I want an earthly religion, I ought to be a Jew. From the instant that the church loses sight of its heavenly calling, it loses, humanly speaking, all.

What has happened to the nations by their having had government given over to them? They have become “beasts”: so the four great monarchies are called. Once the government is transferred to the Gentiles, they become the oppressors of the people of God: first, the Babylonians; secondly, the Medes and Persians; thirdly, the Greeks; then, the Romans. The fourth monarchy consummated its crime at the same instant that the Jews consummated theirs, in being accessory, in the person of Pontius Pilate, to the will of a rebellious nation, by killing Him who was at once the Son of God and King of Israel. Gentile power is in a fallen state, even as the called people, the Jews, are. Judgment is written upon power and calling, as in man’s hand.

In the meanwhile, what happens? First, the salvation of the church. The iniquity of Jacob, the crime of the nations, the judgment of the world, and that of the Jews —all this becomes salvation to the church. It was accomplished all in the death of Jesus. Secondly, all that has passed since that stupendous event has no other object than the gathering together of the children of God. The Jews, the called people, have become rebellious, and are driven away from the presence of God; the nations are become equally rebellious; but government is always there—in a state of ruin indeed; but the patience of God is always there, also waiting until the end. Then what takes place? The church goes to join the Lord in the heavenly places.

Let us now suppose that, in the time decreed by God, all the church is assembled; what will happen? It will go immediately to meet the Lord, and the marriage of the Lamb will take place. Salvation will be consummated in the seat of the glory itself—in the heavenly places.

Where will the nations be? The government of the fourth monarchy will be still in existence, but under the influence and direction of Antichrist; and the Jews will unite themselves to him, in a state of rebellion, to make war with the Lamb. Why all this? and why has not the gospel hindered such a state of things? Because Satan, unto this hour, has not been driven out of the heavenly places, and, by consequence, all that God has done here for man has been spoiled—whether government of the Gentiles, or the actual relationship of the Jews with God. All has been deteriorated by the presence of Satan, always there exercising his baneful influence.

But God now, at the close, when the church is gathered and called up on high, takes things into His own hand. What will He do? Dispossess Satan—drive him from power. It is what Jesus will do when the church shall be manifestly united to Him, and He begins to act to restore everything into its proper order.

Dear friends, as soon as the church shall be received to Christ, there will follow the battle in heaven, in order that the seat of government may be purged of those fertile sources, and of those active agents, of the ills of humanity, and of all creation. The result of such a combat is easily foreseen: Satan will be expelled from heaven, without being yet bound; but he will be cast down to earth, “having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time.” Thenceforward, power will be established in heaven according to the intention of God. But on the earth it will be quite otherwise; for when Satan is driven away from heaven, he will excite the whole earth, and will raise up in particular the apostate part of it, which has revolted against the power, of Christ coming from heaven. It is said, “Therefore

rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! …"

Behold, then, the created heavens occupied by Christ and His church; and Satan in great wrath upon the earth, having but a short time. Under the conduct of Antichrist, the fourth monarchy will become the sphere upon which the activity of Satan will then be displayed, who will unite the Jews with this apostate prince against heaven. I do not enter upon the scriptural proofs here—they have been already spoken of; I merely sum up the facts in the order of their accomplishment. It need scarcely be said that the result of all this will be the judgment and destruction of the beast and Antichrist, the heads of evil among the Gentiles and among the Jews, the secular and spiritual heads of mischief and rebellion on the earth. Jesus Christ will destroy, in the person of Antichrist, the power of Satan in that government, which we have seen was confided to the Gentiles. This wicked one, having joined himself to the Jews, and having placed himself at Jerusalem, as the centre of government of the earth, will be destroyed by the coming of the Lord of lords and King of kings; and Christ will anew occupy this chief seat of government, which will become the place of the throne of God on the earth. But although the Lord is come to the earth, and the power of Satan in Antichrist is destroyed and the government established in the hands of the Righteous One, the earth will not be reduced under His sceptre. The remnant of the Jews is delivered, and Antichrist destroyed; but the world, not yet acknowledging the rights of Christ, will desire to possess His heritage; and the Saviour must clear the land in order that its inhabitants may enjoy the blessings of His reign without

interruption or hindrance, and that joy and glory may be established in this world, so long subjected to the enemy.

The first thing, then, which the Lord will do will be to purify His land (the land which belongs to the Jews) of the Tyrians, the Philistines, the Sidonians; of Edom, and Moab, and Ammon—of all the wicked, in short, from the Nile to the Euphrates. It will be done by the power of Christ in favour of His people re-established by His goodness. The people are put into security in the land, and then will those of them who remain till that time among the nations be gathered together. When the people are living thus in peace, another enemy will come up, namely, Gog; but he will come only for his destruction.

It would seem that in those times—probably at the commencement of this period—besides the personal manifestation of Christ in judgment, there will be a discovery much more calm, much more intimate, of the Lord Jesus to the Jews. This is what will take place when He will descend on the Mount of Olives, where “his feet shall stand,” according to the expression of Zechariah 14:3, 4. It is always the same Jesus; but He will reveal Himself peaceably, and shew Himself, not as the Christ from heaven, but as the Messiah of the Jews.

Blessing to the Gentiles will be the consequence of the restoration of the Jews, and of the presence of the Lord. The church will have been blessed; the apostasy of the fourth monarchy will no longer have existence; the wicked one will be cut off, as well as the unbelieving Israelites; in fine, the land of the Jews will be at peace.

Afterwards there will be the world to come, prepared and introduced by these judgments, and by the presence of the Lord, who will take the place of wickedness and the wicked one. Those who shall have seen the glory manifested in Jerusalem will go and announce its arrival to the other nations. These will submit themselves to Christ; they will confess the Jews to be the people blessed of their Anointed, will bring the rest of them back into their land, and will themselves become the theatre of glory, which, with Jerusalem as its centre, will extend itself in blessing wherever there is man to enjoy its effects. The witness of the glory being spread everywhere, the hearts of men, full of goodwill, submit themselves to the counsels and glory of God in response to this testimony. All the promises of God being accomplished, and the throne of God being established at Jerusalem, this throne will become to the whole earth the source of happiness. The re-establishment of the people of God will be to the world “as life from the dead.”

One thing is to be added, namely, that at this time Satan will be bound, and in consequence the blessing will be without interruption until “he is loosed for a short season.” Instead of the adversary in the heavenly places; instead of his government, the seat of which is now in the air; instead of that confusion and misery which he produces, as much as is allowed him to do; Christ and His church will be there, the source and instrument of blessing ever new. Government in the heavenly places will be the security, and not the hindrance, or the compulsory instrument, of the goodness of God. The glorified church—witness for all, even by its state, of the extent of the love of the Father, who has fulfilled all His

promises, and has been better to our weak hearts than even their hopes—will fill the heavenly places with its own joy; and in its service will constitute the happiness of the world, towards which it will be the instrument of the grace which it shall be richly enjoying. Behold the heavenly Jerusalem, witness in glory of the grace which has placed her so high! In the midst of her shall flow the river of water of life, where grows the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the Gentiles; for even in the glory shall be preserved to her this sweet character of grace. Meanwhile, upon the earth, is the earthly Jerusalem, the centre of the government, and of the reign of the righteousness of Jehovah her God, as indeed in a state of desolation she had been of His justice, she will be the place of His throne— the centre of the exercise of that justice described in such language as 'The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." For in that state of terrestrial glory—though indeed placed there by the grace of the new covenant—this city will still preserve its normal character, that she may be witness of the character of Jehovah, as the church is of that of the Father. God also will realise the full force of that name: "The most high God, possessor of the heavens and the earth"; and Christ will fulfil, in all their fulness, all the functions of High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec, who, after the victory gained over the enemies of God's people, blessed their God on the part of the people, and the people on the part of God; Gen. 14:18, etc.

Dear friends, you will understand that there is an infinity of details into which I have not entered; for example, the circumstance of the Jews who will be persecuted during the troublous times in Judea, of which we have some

instruction in the word. This general sketch will engage you to read the word of God for yourselves on the whole subject. For myself, I attach more importance to the larger features of prophecy', and for this reason, that there is to be found in them, on the one hand, the distinctions of dispensations, which become, by the consideration of these truths, very clear; and on the other, the character of God, which is, in this manner fully unveiled. However this may be, there is nothing to hinder your study of prophecy, even in its minute details. If, indeed, we attempt the examination of the works of man in this way, an abundance of imperfection is found; but it is the contrary in the works of God. The more we enter into their minute details, the more does perfection appear.

May God perfect in you, and in all His children, this separation from the world, which ought to be, before God, the fruit of the expectation of the church, at the discovery of these its heavenly blessings in store, and of the terrible judgments which await all that which still binds man to this lower world; for the judgment will come upon all these earthly things! May God also perfect the desires of my heart, and the witness of the Holy Spirit!

[End Of Prophetic—Vol. 1]

175 Eleven Lectures delivered in Geneva, 1840.

176 As Satan is watchful to take advantage of every part of Scripture not used to a right end, he has not been unmindful of the above argument: he has therefore led many to suppose a partial fulfilment of many of the prophecies to be their complete accomplishment. An undue prominency has been given by many

commentators to little events, owing to the scope of prophecy not being understood in its utility to the present wants of the soul, or ultimately to those who in the midst of Israel wait for redemption in Zion.

177 Properly, the word of prophecy confirmed or made more sure, to wit, by the transfiguration.

178 It is perhaps for this reason that it is said in Mark 13 that the Son Himself knoweth not the day nor the hour, because He Himself was the object of this decree of Jehovah. He will receive everything from the hand of God, as man and servant, as also God has now highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:9). Speaking as a prophet, Christ announced His coming as the terrible judgment which was to fall upon an unbelieving nation; but the counsel of God as to this judgment, or at least as to the moment of its approach, was contained in those words, “Sit thou at my right hand until….” Christ as a servant waited (as always, and this was His perfection) upon the will of His Father, and to receive the kingdom when the Father would have it so. It is worthy of remark that Psalm no and Mark 13 refer exactly to the same subject. The enemies are the Jews who rejected Him (Luke 19:27).

179 It must be carefully attended to, that it is a question here of things, and in heaven and earth, and in no way of sinners remaining in their unbelief, who are in neither.

180 There may have been, at the time of the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, circumstances in some respects resembling those which will yet take place when the prophecies of Mark 13 and Matthew 24 shall be accomplished, so that the disciples might have been able to use the warnings which they contain (although there

is no certainty of the fact). But there are insurmountable obstacles in applying “the abomination of desolation “to the army of Titus, or to the Roman ensigns. For there is a period which dates from this event, of which we see no fulfilment, in counting from the taking of Jerusalem. So that it has been found necessary to transport this part of prophecy to popery, which we know has nothing to do with the invasion of Titus. The passage in Luke would seem to have more to do with the events which took place at the taking of Jerusalem by Titus; but again I say, to attempt to apply the passages which have been occupying us to this event is to lose our time.

181 For the meaning of the expression, “spirit of his mouth,” see Isaiah 11:4; ch. 30:33.

182 This passage, compared with 1 Corinthians 15 shews that the appearing of Christ is not at the end; for at the end He has delivered up the kingdom, whereas here, the kingdom takes place at His appearing. Note—the whole period is spoken of, and therefore the judgment of the dead as well as of the quick.

183 This passage explains Matthew 16:28; also Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:1, 2; and Luke 9:27, 28.

184 Critical editions read “they” instead of “we”; but this only strengthens the doctrine we are occupied with, as pointing to a remnant on the earth when the church is gone.

185 It is not exclusively by His own resurrection, though there was the first and most important proof. The reader will do well to pay attention to the expression, “from among the dead,” employed elsewhere. It is an expression distinct from the present, and indicates the introduction of a divine power into the realm of dead)—a

power which withdraws some from it in such a sort as to distinguish them completely from others. This it was that astonished the disciples (Mark 9:10). Resurrection was the faith of every orthodox Jew; but what they did not understand was a resurrection from among the dead.

186 It was in metempsychosis, or transmigration to other bodies, after all.

187 Remark the difference: he believed God was able to perform it, we, that He has done so. Through it we believe on Him.

188 In the expression (2 Tim. 1:10): “Brought life and immortality to light,”— “immortality” signifies the incorruptibility of the body, and not the immortality of the soul.

189 i.e., the propagation of this as a special doctrine comes from them.

190 Really, judgment (see Greek); which is said before to be committed to Christ.

191 For the use of this word, see (in the Greek) John 5:35; ch. 16:4, 25,26; Luke 22:53; 1 John 2:18; 2 Corinthians 7:8; Philemon 15.

192 We read in 2 Samuel 23 a remarkable prophecy of the judgment of the wicked one who “cannot be taken with hands,” and of the beauty and blessing of the coming of that One, who will reign in righteousness, and whose blessings will correspond to His faithfulness in keeping the covenant during our state of misery.

193 The common translation is “cast down,” but “set” or “placed” is more exact, after the LXX and a good number of other authorities.

194 Verse 35, the Jews are passed by. Read verse 36: “The king shall do according to his own will.

195 That is, his accusing power is rendered null by virtue of the blood and work of Jesus Christ.

196 It is remarkable that the dragon has his crowns on his heads; the beast of chapter 13 has them on his horns. There is no question of crowns on the beast in the last form of all that he takes.

197 The false prophet is not Mahomet. “He exerciseth the power of the first beast before him.” Now Mahomet has never done this.

198 [It is well known and sure that the genuine reading is according to Greek “and shall be present” (not “and yet is”). This evidently confirms the case, besides removing a sort of enigma, or paradox, in the vulgar text.—Ed.)

199 The idea which usually prevails in the interpretation of this passage is, that parousia and heemera have the same meaning affixed to them by the apostle, and that he uses the words interchangeably. Parousia means “presence,” not necessarily involving manifestation to the world; heemera “day,” on the contrary, always has to do, in the Old Testament, with judgment. Here the apostle uses the presence of the Lord, and our gathering together to Him, in contrast with the day: “I beseech you, by his presence and our gathering to him, not to be distracted about the day, as if it were here.”

200 See Hale’s Analysis of Chronology, vol. 1, p.p. 352, 357.

201 See note, p. 367.

202 We must take care to distinguish the Gog of Ezekiel from the Gog and Magog in the Revelation.

203 Everyone is aware how much more largely this is the case since, and that the dispute about the holy places has been the occasion of the Eastern war. The nations are burdening themselves with Jerusalem. (Note to fourth edition.)

204 It is commonly supposed that the judgment which is spoken of in this chapter is the last judgment—the general judgment: this is a mistake. It is the judgment of the nations living upon this earth, and not of the dead. There is no question of the resurrection, but only of the judgment of the Gentiles. What will happen to the Jews is mentioned in chapter 24; then, what will happen to believers, or at least professors of the faith of Christ; and then, the fate of the Gentiles. It is the judgment of the living, and not of the dead. We say it is the judgment of the living, because we read, “Before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.” That which has given rise to the supposition that it is the judgment of the dead, is this passage, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal”; but this only means that the judgment of the living will be final, like that of the dead. When God judges, whether the dead or the living, His judgment sends the good into life eternal, and the wicked into everlasting punishment. The judgment of the living is as sure as that of the dead.

205 See also, for this appeal to promises apart from conditions, Deuteronomy 9:5, 27; ch. 10:15. In Micah 7:19, 20, these same promises made to Abraham

constitute the prophetic hope. And the faithful Israelite, Simeon (Luke 2:25, etc.), recalls them as the ground of confidence to Israel, who, in these promises, might rest on the faithfulness of God.

206 And the royalty, raised up of God Himself, thus failed, and judgment passed upon it, though a lamp was reserved to David in Jerusalem till the days of Zedekiah.

207 If Zion means the church, the gathering of all, and the joy of the heavens and the earth, would be necessarily the church's joy; for that gathering would constitute the church's joy. Therefore the supposition of its desertion would be ridiculous; whereas the chapter, if we suppose desertion of the literal city Zion, when the gathering takes place, is very intelligible; but the Lord goes on to say, that she shall be the centre of blessings, for that He can never forget her.

208 We learn from Dr. Hales' Analysis of Chronology, vol. 1, p. 379, that the descendants of Cush extended their settlements from Chusistan, "the land of Cush," or Susiana, on the coast of the Persian gulf (into which the Euphrates falls), through Arabia to the Red sea, and thence crossed into Africa beyond the Nile. The rivers of Cush may therefore well mean the Nile and Euphrates. He also makes (p. 355) the descendants of Nimrod settled in Assyria to be called Chusdim, or "Godlike Cushites." (p. 354.) [Tr.]

209 The deliverance of the earth is found elsewhere.

210 This is true in principle; but Ruth, as a figure, applies more directly to the remnant of Israel, brought in under grace.