

1 Corinthians - Commentaries by George Vicesimus Wigram

Bible Treasury: Volume 11, Two Adams, The (15:45-50)

The thought on my heart is to speak a little as to the two Adams, as here brought before us.

There is a wonderful contrast presented, in scripture between the two Adams—the Adam of the garden of Eden, and the last Adam, who is a life-giving Spirit.

The contrast between these two is not merely a matter for the mind of man to be interested in, or to occupy itself with. The fact of the two beings before us is the wonderful way of God in setting forth His own glory. It was just this; He took occasion of the failure, misconduct, and ruin of Adam and Eve in Eden, to bring forth the exceeding riches and the magnificence of His own character of truthfulness and large-hearted grace, both of which Satan had denied in speaking to Eve, when he told her that God did not mean what He said, that He was niggardly and narrow-minded and that He wished to keep from her something that would be of use to her and Adam—the knowledge of good and evil. God's answer to that came out when sin had been brought in, and the whole human family in our first parents had been utterly lost and ruined. God's truth, and the large-heartedness of His grace and mercy, came out, and He said, in the presence of Adam and Eve, to Satan, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

Now, one of the things that strike me in these last days is, how little the minds generally of religious persons are really cleared entirely from the first Adam, and recognize everything in connection with the first Adam to be dead loss, and if they have got anything whatever, that they have it in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me briefly pass down the account given in the end of Rom. 5:12: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The thing that distinguished Adam was that sin entered into the world by him. Well, the heart might say, I grant you that, but that does not prove the complete ruin of the whole race. Does it not? Why death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Death passed upon all upon the ground of their being descendants of the first man who had sinned. When they begat a son, he was begotten with their own likeness and character; and in Genesis that character is strongly marked in the murder of Abel, for Cain withstood God, and would not, even in type, recognize the sacrifice as appointed by God.

Verse 15 speaks also of that one, "through the offense of one many be dead." In verse 16, again, sin and "the judgment, was by one to condemnation." In verse 17, "By one man's offense death reigned by one." Verse 18, "By the offense of one judgment (same upon all men to condemnation." Verse 19, "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." When God gave the perfect description of what man ought to be—to love God with all his heart, and all his soul, and with all his mind—the effect was this, it caused the offense to abound. And on which of these verses can anybody build for any comfort? God has said, "Wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" not merely governmental wrath, but God in heaven judging righteous judgment. That is the picture God gives of the father and mother from whom the whole race descend, and everyone has a likeness to his father and mother. Where is there a single stone then for his foot to rest upon? Ah! but look at the other side, not only the contrast, striking as it is, but it is a contrast brought in, taking occasion by the very ruin, so that there is not one single thing in the Lord Jesus Christ, not one, of which I could say with intelligence, "I hope that will stand me in stead," without owning the entire ruin of all connected with the first Adam.

Everything is in ruin and under judgment, and God well understood what He had pledged Himself to, when He said, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He well understood the condition to which our first parents were sunk. There was not a thing that met His mind in either of them, not a power they could work forth in any way for blessing to themselves. They were not only then and there in a predicament, but there was no power in them. Whatever was to be done, it was the seed of the woman alone could do it. The serpent had power, and unless God could find some one who could come in to put his foot on the head of that serpent, all were lost, lost, lost, for eternity; every single individual would have been lost. But God could do it, and God would do it, and speaks of Him who was His champion to put down every mark of evil Satan had brought into the nether heavens and nether earth, and to bring in a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

See what is said of this same Adam in this same series—Rom. 5:15: "If through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." We have thus the antagonism of God in His love against the ruined state of the creature, and not a single thing but God and Christ—not one. It is all the gift of God through Christ. All that He finds in the sinner is death, and bondage, and corruption—nothing else whatever. He goes on again (verse 16), "The free gift is of many offenses unto justification." What did He do as an answer to those offenses? He brings justification. To whom does He, bring it? To man, whose mouth is stopped, and who has not one word to say for himself. "They which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." Verse 18, "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Lastly, verse 21, "That as sin, hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Then, again, beloved friends, if I have got connected with the last Adam, I have in Him that which just tells me how God has taken occasion of my ruin individually to set forth. His Almighty power, and the riches of His grace in Christ, and nothing else whatever. My eyes are brought then to Christ, and all I look at in myself is utter ruin; but there is a Savior. I am never turning to myself, but I am turning to Him whom God has thrust in against the will of man—no one can deny it is against the will of man. Christ has set forth the virtues of His salvation, and when Satan found Him in the world to do that work, the hatred of man came out against Him, and man came to be a destroyer. I take these two persons, and one is here, the other there. Now on whom is my back turned, and to which is my face turned? Have I my back turned clean

against Adam, and the whole family of which I was a member? There is nothing but ruin there, it is no use turning to it, it is ruin from first to last, and I will set my face Christward and Godward. I cannot look this way and that way at the same time.

It is good to know the contrast as to what I was when found by Christ. Mine was not a living soul when Christ picked it up; it was a living soul when made by God, not when Christ picked it up. As to the one to whom I look for blessing, which is it? Have you been thoroughly cleaned out of everything that grew on the stock of the Adam and Eve family?

Now let me call attention to the use God makes of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think here again, beloved friends, if I may express it in simplicity of heart before you—I think there is great shortcoming in the present day in presenting God's thoughts to those whose consciences are in any measure awake, and a want in many who, I do not doubt, are the Lord's, of setting to their seal the work of the Lord towards poor sinners.

I would just like to remark as to the difference on the great day of atonement between the atonement and the Azazel, or scape-goat. The blood carried in was for God; it was proclaiming that to be the mercy-seat. Through the rent veil is the way the believer draws nigh, and when inside he finds on the throne the Lamb. The scape-goat had the sins confessed over him, and took the sins away to a land not inhabited. That is the part I want to look at in detail. First, as to clearing the ground on the question of sin, God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and, if I am to have confidence in the thought of meeting Him, I must have known that which will enable me to meet Him who knows everything connected with my ruin.

In connection with sin, I think there are three things very important to separate the one from the other. What is sin in principle? What are sins as distinguished from sin? and what is guilt? These are the three things I want to call attention to before passing on. When sin is brought in in Eden, it is very simple indeed. God had given everything freely to Adam, to remain his as long as he marked his dependence upon God by not touching a certain tree. What came out with Eve was, she thought she could better herself, and she took the place of independence. Adam did it in a more solemn and deliberate way after. Self-willed independence was the secret of sin. God had pledged Himself to give Adam everything. But they preferred catering for themselves to being dependent on God. If I take self-willed independence as a definition of sin, do I not find in every one self-willed independence of God? Is it not born with us? Is not self-will what we see even in a babe? and as a child grows up, we hear, "I like" and "I don't like;" and as men get into the world, there is a seeking after their own. How many a one, terrified at God's word as to judgment to come, will lay to heart how he is to meet God, and toil and labor, entirely setting aside the work of Christ, and never taking any notice of it until he finds he cannot succeed that way. Three years I toiled and labored after God awoke me, and I saw something of the beauty of Christ too, and never thought of asking God what His way was of dealing with sin. What came out? What did it all come to? That eighteen hundred and upwards of thirty years ago, God, without consulting me, without waiting for me to say whether I liked His way or disliked it, had given His Son from His bosom, and made a way for the sinner to draw near to God. Is there no conflict, no thoughts of our own that we superadded? Ah, to be sure there is. What are all these thoughts to accomplish a way of our own but just self-willed independence of our own human minds? Sins are will working out into action. When Cain was born, Eve said, I have gotten the man from the Lord, I have the child; but he was a murderer, not a Savior. When he found that God had respect unto Abel's offering, and not to him, he set his heart to kill his brother.

What is the difference between that and guilt? Guilt is the state of one having set aside the laws of One who has power over him.

When would a creature have come to an end of the experience of the impossibility of God and the sinner meeting together? When their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. How could I grasp the largeness of God's mind against sin—the creature-worm, if you please—turning His back on God, and saying, No, I will cater for myself, I will be independent? How could I measure what God's penalty would be—His hatred of that before the whole universe? Where are these three things met? God shows in Rom. 6 that. He had His thoughts about the humiliation side—the experience of the Son of His love down here on earth. Mark these two verses (3 and 17), "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." That is, God proposed the doctrine, set it forth, that the only hiding-place to be found, for any one belonging to the family of the first Adam, was in the last Adam, in the depth of His humiliation. To, what extent does He go?

These three words, "Crucified together with him, dead together with him, buried together with him," tell the extent of it. There is a refuge, and a safe one, for one who knows that he is ruined in himself, belonging to a ruined race, and having a ruined head to the family in Adam and Eve.

The three things which come in—I know who the Nazarene was and is, and I know that He was set forth evidently crucified, put to open shame by man, and in the hour when everything told to the grief and sorrow of His heart, God added an element the creature never could have added, and He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Psa. 22 is wonderful in connection with that cry of the Lord, because, immediately after expressing a sense of forsakenness, He goes on to vindicate God for having done it. No creature has ever been forsaken for sin. He was forsaken when He took the cup from the hand of His Father, and was put to open shame before heaven and earth, hanging on the cross.

Was there any self-willed independence in Him? Never, never; He was the only one who could carry out the mind of His Father perfectly. Ah, I know the secret, my conscience understands it. If there were not a second man on earth that would say, He was put to open shame for me, I say I have it all to myself, and I bear the whole burden as the one whose self-willed independence brought it on. He bore the penalty, the judgment came on Him. Seeing this, a power is brought in on the soul which gives a death-blow to independency.

If you do so and so, I will do so and so. God is thought to be very hard. We cannot satisfy even our own minds—it is impossible. When the soul knows God made Him to be sin for us, and that He bore the penalty, what a simple thing to say, Is that the God I have been so self-willed against? Am I to go on longer in my own independency against the God who gave His Son from His bosom for me? Shall I go on so? Shall this principle not be hated and judged by me? I see the love of God in having put His Son to shame—the One in whom the penalty was borne; then I loathe this self-will, I learn to watch against it, in anywise, and watch against attributing any blessing whatever save to Him that hung upon the cross.

What had I to do with His hanging there? Nothing but my sins: as to its virtues, nothing. Men may find the nails, the Romans may have found the spear, that may be man's part; but what is God's part in the cross? "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

When God looks at the Son of His love in connection with the sinner—the Son crucified to be a hiding-place for poor sinners—what are God's thoughts? Ah! I have revealed that; you are blessed in knowing how I could reveal it, to get honor to Myself and to My Son, the only One who could look sin in the face, and take the judgment—you a creature of yesterday! then it is the death-blow comes to self-will. I want to begin with God, I wish, to begin with God. When we get to the blessed Lord in Psa. 40, it is not only that He in that way charged Himself with the sin that rested on the human race, and could do it, but He speaks of sins more in number than the hairs of His head.

How it will shine forth when the Lord, according to Zechariah, comes in, all their sins and iniquities gone, and Israel shall say, "This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us." The Lord claimed them all, and makes the hearts of Israel willing to abase themselves before God.

If I have no good thing to give Him, I will give Him my bad things; any sins, my self-will, my guilt, I will give to God and to Christ. I have got a heavy burden of ruin, and I will let the Lord be heartily welcome to it. You never get that till you get grace and mercy as the ground of your standing. I give all my self-will to Christ. I have done nothing but sin; I will give all my sins to Him. Yes, He is the only one who has borne the judgment, He is the one who has borne it, and He is the one who is the joy of God's heart as the Savior of lost ones.

Do you know Him as your Savior? not only your Savior from the wrath to come, and from Satan and the world, but from your own self? Many a one wants to have that driven home. What characterized the Lord when here? All that Satan could do, he could get nothing out of the Lord. When Christ was here, He was always master of Himself. The Lord undertakes to save us from ourselves. When He presents us to the Father, we shall be in glorious bodies, delivered from humiliation, made like unto His own body in glory. Then we shall be perfectly delivered from everything not of Him. Can you say to God, I am a poor, simple, foolish thing, but I see that thou hast said, and written it down, that I am crucified together with Christ? Thou lookest on me, having faith in the love that gave Thy Son; thou lookest on me as crucified together with Him who was put to open shame.

A second thing comes out—dead together with Him. He gave His life a ransom for us, and the eternal life with which He quickens us is the eternal life which He had before the world was. There can be no mistake as to what that quickening is. Dead, buried; ah, do all believers know what it is to reckon themselves buried together with Christ? When I think of the grace of Christ, I say there was the end of myself. God put me away on the cross.

Now as to the power of this practically: if you have got any gospel at all, what is your gospel? Is it the gospel of eternal life? If so, I expect you to be doers, not hearers only. You cannot have life, and not be a doer. God has met everything against me in Christ. What is the grand mark of that given to us here? "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." Do you reckon yourselves to be dead? Do you know what it is to be in communion with God? That He is a living person, whose glory we can have no idea about? The Lord Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God; and do you and I know what it is to say of everything connected with the first Adam, Thou sayest of me that I am crucified together with Christ, dead together, buried together with Him? If thou sayest that I can reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, I believe. Yes, you say; but do not you see that I do not feel it? He never said that you would feel it? Abraham was given certain promises, and God took special care to let everything in nature get the sentence of God against it. You see how faith versus feeling was tried in Abraham. "A father of many nations have I made thee." I can quite suppose the people around him saying, Where are these nations? You have no child even, only Ishmael, who was not born in the house. Where are all these nations? What did Abraham say? Just leave all alone. God has committed Himself by promise, and He is able to perform—leave it all alone.

He took the truth of God just as the thing in which he could rest, and would rest, and did rest. I do wish to press that side of the gospel. The heart having found in the humiliation of Christ that which enables it to look ruin in the face, and say, I am not afraid to see the place Adam got into, not afraid of the flesh or of the world. Why? Because there is a Savior. "Know ye not that as many as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death." We are crucified together with Him; dead together with Him; buried together with Him. There is where the saint gets rest. God said it, God has written it. We have learned just a little of the blessedness of the humiliation of Christ, if we have faith; but God only knows the fullness of it, and He will give us perfect blessing in His own time.

G. V. W.

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The Coming Kingdom: An Outline of the Revelation, Lecture 2 (15:35-38)

(1 Cor. 15:35-38; Hymn 106; Prayer; Hymn 179.) Revelation 16.

Last week we were occupied with the vision given to John in Patmos. Being in the Spirit, he saw Jesus Christ in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, but with all the glorious insignia of the Ancient of days (yet Son of man) examining the churches. The whole scene was brought before John's mind as if it were on earth and in Patmos.

In our study today, the scene is laid in heaven. John is in the Spirit, and as caught up thither finds the same Jesus Christ, but here as the Lamb that had been slain and in the midst of the throne of the Lord God Almighty.

I made last week, a prefatory remark or two upon the importance of every one remembering the unity of God's truth; and pointed out that the revelation of the sent One involves His life and sufferings in humiliation here on earth, as now past; His patience and gifts, as now at God's right hand on high; and hereafter, His coming glories whether in heaven or on earth. Without seeing these three subdivisions in the service of the Lord, neither can its connection with His Father and God (of whom and to whom and through whom that service was, and is, and will be), be enjoyed, nor the fullness of the gospel be at all rightly understood.

To-night I desire to add to those prefatory remarks, a few words in answer to the question: Who is this Lord who in humiliation, patience, and glory works such wondrous things in behalf of God and His saints, and before men and angels?

"Worship God" (said the angel in Rev. 19:10) for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," or, "the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." This is always true, as to every part of scripture, for no scripture is of any private interpretation, though truth might be ministered in a fragmentary way at one time, and at another time in a more comprehensive form:1 yet the center and end of all scripture is Jesus Himself; it is of Him the Spirit testifies in the word, and in us: the scope of no context is seen till its connection with Jesus is seen.

Evidently this book of the Revelation includes an immense range and has divine and heavenly depths and heights in it. For Jesus Christ is spoken of in it as the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; and, though not enlarging upon it, yet "His Father" from time to time referred to. (Chaps. 1:6; 2:27; 3:5 and 21; 14:1.) He is in the midst too of the throne, of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai (chap. 5:6); and the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple in the templeless city of glory (chap. 21:22); the glory of God did lighten it and the-Lamb is the light thereof (ver. 23); the throne is the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Chap. 22:1; &c., &c.)

Moreover, past eternity was evidently His who is the First and the Last. A being who never had a beginning, self-existent, is not a description, of mere man, but is true of God alone-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son was only begotten in deity and He was the object of worship to heavenly intelligences (even ere man existed); then too all the counsels and plans (referred to in scripture) as from before the foundation of the world. (that is, ere this creation had existence) were in Him and for Him. (See Eph. 1:3-10.)

Again creation, providence; and government are three kingdoms in which the Son's power and glories have been manifest. (See John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 1:5.) So again, though much more fully testified of) as to eternal redemption and salvation; these had and have no being save through and in Him. Study Himself, beloved friends, in Philippians 2:5-13; and Colossians 1:12-20; and 2:9,10, &c.; and own the infinite majesty of this Jesus Christ, who knowing all things, said of Himself, " No one knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any one the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:27.)

I will speak yet more freely and do you judge what I say.

Jesus—who is He? Matthew says they shall call His name Emmanuel, that is, God with us; thou shalt call His name Jesus (Jehovah a-saving), for He shall save His people from their sins. (Chap. 1:21-23.) The name of Jehovah is not a creature's name, and Jesus is the man that is Jehovah's fellow (Zech. 13:7); and God manifest in flesh. Before any angel or creature of any kind was formed, He was in the beginning and He was with God, and He was God; and without Him was not one thing made that was made. One that never had a beginning can only be said of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, according to the newly revealed divine name; I say this as to now, because in the old scriptures, we read of Jehovah, Messiah, and Ruach (or the Spirit). God never began to be: and the Son was with the Father and the Spirit in eternity, God. The first Adam in Eden pointed like a finger post to Him that was to come, was a type of Him as the last Adam, and yet He who was the last Adam existed before the first, even in eternity. In the garden of Eden, Adam was created first, and out of a crooked rib taken from his side while he slept Eve was formed.' In its separation from the human body, such a thing would be in itself most unsightly, yet God built it up into Eve as a companion and helpmeet for him. The last Adam will have a bride, the confidante of His love, the church formed by the Holy Spirit a new creation in Christ Jesus.

When creation got under the power of sin, it became a wreck, and the earth was judged for man's wickedness at the deluge. Yet creation has still a voice to man, as Psalm 19 and Romans 1:19-23, show us power from everlasting and divine glory are both stamped upon it. Men own that: that even in nature there are proofs that but one being made it all and He of power self-existing. But, what if I say, Yes, there is but one God and He very good, as I judge from natural religion, but has He always been my first object in life? Alas no! and so, according to the testimony of natural theology I am lost. But God who is rich in mercy gave His Son, and in Jesus was life, and the life was the light of man; as lost in myself I bow to Him in whom there is a new creation.

Then as to providence; we see how in the first creation every tree and plant had seed; so also as to the fowls of heaven, and the fish of the sea, and animals; there had been provision made for pro-creating the species. But when sin had come in, God made a covenant in providence and took care to have the rainbow as the sign of it. For wicked as man might be, He would continue the seasons, and give crops while the world stood: and He declared that it should not again be destroyed by water. How blessedly, too, does the Lord proclaim this truth as to the sun shining upon the evil and upon the good; and the rains descending likewise; as to the lilies of the field and the grass which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; and as to not one sparrow falling to the ground without our Father which is in heaven, &c., &c. Moreover, providence is used by Him in His dealings of grace; as in Psalm 107 for sinner and for saint.. When I look round me on the earth and see the fruits of sin on every side, what could I do if I did not know that there, was the blessed One above and behind it all? Affliction, hunger, sickness are all around in this groaning creation. I should be sorrowful unto despair, but I see by faith the God of providence, above and behind it all, using it all for His own glory and to draw and force men to come to Him.

Then, too, there is a kingdom of government, God governing all down here. Once He made Himself king, as well as God, of a nation, Israel. When Israel would not own Him, either as their God or their king, he called a Nebuchadnezzar to take the kingdom; and, when he was heedless as to his thoughts and words, he too was judged. By whom but Himself do kings reign and princes decree justice? He raised a Darius and an Alexander and a Caesar and told out what He meant to do, hundreds of years before He did it. Under Cesar our Lord was crucified, and that He foretold. And, that we might know Him and own Him in government, He has told us how all the glory of the great image of Gentile imperial power, shown to Nebuchadnezzar, will pass away through man's wickedness; and the gold, and the silver, and the brass, and the iron mingled with clay become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, before the Lord Messiah coming to take up Israel; the king that is to come in the name of the Lord.

Then, last and most important, there is the kingdom of eternal redemption and salvation. Until the fullness of time came, there was no seed of the virgin born by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit: no Son of the Most High that could be laid in the manger; or, as a youth, go and hear and answer questions in the temple; that could afterward go about in Almighty power, doing good and teaching; and then be crucified, put to death and be buried. He is the one of whom and to whom the Holy Spirit always bears witness. Are your spirits occupied with that with which the Holy Spirit is occupied?

The sum of these two sets of prefatory remarks, that of last week and that just given,² might be thus stated. The beauty of the character and ways of Jesus, as displayed in His past humiliation; in His present patience; and in His coming glories (when He is looked at as Redeemer and Savior for eternity, and His actings therein), do not exhaust, are not equal to, the aggregate of the testimony which the Spirit and the written word give to Him. Himself is ever one and the same; but the displays and manifestations of God through Him—who shall count, who can tell?

I must here make another remark and that is of importance. The connection of that which is found in each book of the scriptures, with the subject treated of in it, and the aspect in which, the subject is being looked at, is much more stringent and distinctive than most are aware. For instance, as the four gospels give us four different aspects of the life of the Lord, when down here on earth, so do the epistles give us different aspects of Him, and what is His now, where He is; and of Him, and what will be His hereafter. For instance, Ephesians and Corinthians both treat of Christ as in Headship of the church. But in Ephesians, it is the church as body and bride of Christ; in Corinthians, it is the church as the church of the living God.

Again in John's gospel, we have the Lord doing everything down here needful for the many sons to be brought to glory. When risen from the dead, a supplementary chapter is added, in which the millennial glory on earth is first pictured, and then that which treats of the continuance of what characterized John's beyond Peter's day. In John's epistles the eternal life in the children is first treated of. Then in second epistle, the solemn responsibility of holding fast the truth; and in the third, life and grace pressed; and Diotrephes made to be of no comparative importance.

In the Revelation, the Lord, where He now is, is shown as the Head of all government and religion. The Son of man, &c., and the Lamb. This produces certain contrasts, as well as, occasionally, correspondences in what is found in the various epistles. As one result, you will find that verses often quoted as equivalent the one to the other, are very different one from the other, when each is studied in its context. In reading, I desire to read what is before me, and to study it in its context, and to note the aspect in which the subject is looked at in the book.

The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ &c. has its own lessons to teach. It is more like Daniel than any other book in scripture, and has large connections with the contents of Daniel's prophecies,—though its own line is peculiar to itself and distinctive. There is a spiritual propriety in Peter's entering into many things which are not found in John's writings, and resting in detail upon them. They were according to the line given to Peter, and not according to that given to John. So likewise as to Peter and Paul, and the differences between their lines. And so as to John and Paul, their lines may often approximate, and meet at various points, but the aspect of their subjects is different and so a fuller and more comprehensive communication of truth is the result. This ought to be carefully attended to.)

To turn now to our study of the Revelation, or Apocalypse. Last Tuesday we loosed the first band round the roll of John's stream of time. The roll soon stopped unfolding itself; and the close of what lay open before us was at the end of chapter 3. We examined the introductory chapter and the two succeeding ones. The scene was laid in Patmos, isle of John's exile. There, in vision, John in the Spirit saw the Ancient of days as Son of man in His visitation (to use an ecclesiastical term) of the seven churches.

I now loose the second band; and the roll of John's stream of time runs out to the middle of chapter 19. Verse 10 is the last visible. The scene is here laid in quite a different place from where it was before: for (says John) "After these things" (those in chaps. 1, 2, 3.) I looked and behold a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, saying, Come up hither³ and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." Then we find John was in the Spirit and saw things in heaven. In chapter 5:6, the Lamb is discovered in the midst of the throne; and in chapter 6 and onward to chapter 9. He begins teaching His servant the things which were to come forth from Inn on the throne. There seems to be a change, a blank, between chapters 9 and 10.

Down to the end of chapter 9. John was in heaven in spirit and vision, learning from what went forth from the Lamb in heaven. But there was nothing come forth to the earth which when seen in itself; such an one as John could read and understand. In chapter 10, as I judge, it is the messenger of the covenant who comes forth, and then there is a testimony for John and His servants to give upon earth and among men; and the things on earth assume the forms predicted in prophecy, as in Daniel and the Psalms, the preparation for, the beginning of, the end.

With chapter 19:11 The Lord lays aside His hidden privacy, leaves heaven, and comes out Himself, and with Him His armies from heaven; there is no longer a testimony to be given by servant or prophet, for the King of kings and Lord of lords is openly displayed as openly taking vengeance upon His foes. This we hope to study next week, namely, on the 25th.

The throne in chapter 4 is that of the LORD God Almighty (or Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai). Observe the name used in creating (in Gen. 1-2:3) is Elohim, GOD. At verse 4 of chapter 2, that is, when man's settling in Eden is in question, the name is LORD GOD. This word LORD is often used in scripture and the Psalms as marking relationship between GOD and man; as "the LORD said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country," &c. "Gen. 12:1.) Abram was to become a specimen of one in relationship with the true God. So this, name was that which marked God's relationship with the descendants of Abraham, the Jews (Exodus 3 proves it). As to Shaddai, we read Genesis 17:1, "The LORD appeared to Abram and said, I am the Almighty God [El Shaddai], walk before me and be thou perfect." (Look, friends, at the word "walk before me," I pray you. It is a fresh version of the old truth, "Enoch walked with God.") Shaddai means rather almighty in resources than almighty in the abstract; and that was well proved by Abraham, by Israel, and may be by each homeless pilgrim now. "Almighty in resources:" is He your God? (source and stream and end? and in known relationship with yourself, each of you?) The word Jehovah is a title never given to any save the self-existent One. Not so the word Lord or lord, possessor or master.

There are a variety of thrones referred to in scripture as the seats or resting-places of God: do, not hastily assume that there is but one. This one,⁴ in chapter 4, has emblems of creation, providence, and government, about it. The four living creatures, the rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald, and the four and twenty seats, round about the one grandest seat of all-seat of Him who to look upon

was like unto a jasper and a sardine stone, suffice to prove it. The four living creatures lead the praise in verses 8, 9; and then (ver. 10) the four and twenty elders, in the glory of their royal priesthood, worship Him that sits on the central seat, and give back, in adoration and worship, the blessings they have received: they fall down and worship Him, casting their crowns before Him, while (with the music of a thankful heart) they sing, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power," &c. (Chap. 5:11.) The signs of judgment (ver. 5) and the seven lamps of fire, now burning before the throne, which are the seven, Spirits of God, and (ver. 6) the sea of glass like unto crystal (purity in fixed abidance), should be noticed.

But where is the Lamb all this while? none such is to be seen there as yet. Now I ask your particular attention to this. John saw, in the right hand of Him who was on the throne, a little roll, written inside and out, sealed with seven seals.

And a mighty angel heralded the challenge, "Who is worthy to open the little roll [it contained secrets reserved till then] and to loose its seals?"

No one in or of the universe could be found able to open it, or even to look upon it. John wept. But one of the elders bids him not to weep, for there was One (not a mere man nor to be found in the range of this creation), and He had overcome to open it and to loose its seals. Yes! the Nazarene, in whose face men spat, the One despised and rejected on earth, mocked with a crown of thorn, and a reed scepter, has prevailed, is the One that has overcome all that stood against Him; and, among other fruits of His service to God, He must have this of being the One who, in the midst of the throne, is to be the communicator to those whom He has bought, and who serve Him (even now down here) of the things which were shortly to come to pass. And we know this.

And "lo! in the throne [which must have opened to let Him be seen, as He is not seen in chapter 4.], and of the four living creatures,⁵ and of the twenty-four elders, stood [the central object of all] a Lamb as slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth." Mark this, the Lamb once slain, but now with the perfection of power and intelligence, and both of these communicative, because inseparably connected with the seven Spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth. And mark, too, thus discovered and made manifest (God's own rich resource) His bearing! "He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne."

Thereon (vers. 8-10) the four living creatures and the glorified royal priesthood fall down now before the Lamb and worship Him. The harps mark melody in the scene. And the golden vials full of incense show, amid the glory, how God, in the whole pathway to it, had put all the tears and cries of need of His poor people here below into His bottle. Remembered by Him they are, remembered by us too, they will be, in the glory.

Verses 9, 10 show us how far what John had learned to sing in Patmos when he saw his loving Master there, was identical with the mind of heaven and the song of the twenty-four elders in glory.

The angelic host around (vers. 11, 12) worship too; but they cannot touch the note of redeeming love and salvation through the blood, as we poor sinners saved by grace can. The song circles out and around to the whole universe, below the throne. (Ver. 13.) The four living creatures say Amen and the twenty-four elders worship. It is a rich scene to have before us! The feeblest and least, all there, can and do give back in praise that which they have received.

Observe the difference between the blood as of atonement (in Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; and Heb. 10.), and the blood, as applied to the conscience, and setting the heart free to sing as with John in chapter 1:5, and the blood (Rom. 3:26); and the blood, as in a wider range, connected with salvation and redemption as here.

That the Lamb is the communicator to His own of knowledge and light is the blessed instruction given in this portion. A fresh token of His worthiness and love to us, and of God's rich grace.

In chapter 6 the opening of the seals begins.

The first four, introduced by one or other of the living creatures (ver. 2), an all-conquering power; (ver. 4), one that takes peace from the earth, and causes men to kill one another; (ver. 5), famine of the necessities of life, not of its luxuries; (ver. 6), destruction over one-fourth of the earth by means of the sword, hunger, death, and wild beasts, God's four plagues; verse 7, souls beneath the altar of those slain for the word of God and for the testimony given, come into remembrance and are cheered; verse 8, a terrific earthquake eliciting from the wicked on earth the confession of their alienation from and distrust of God. For their hearts and ways were not right with Him. The unreconciled always expects destruction because he deserves it and thinks God will be against him, for he is against God. Injure any man, and you will naturally expect that he will injure you if he can. Our thoughts too often are the expression of our own selves.

Chapter 7 is a parenthesis-in the midst of judgment, mercy is remembered. First, 144,000: that is, 12,000 of each tribe of Israel sealed; that no judgment for the earth may reach them (vers. 1-8); and, secondly (vers. 9-17), an innumerable multitude, gathered from all nations of the earth, stand before the throne and the Lamb, clothed in white and palms in their hands. How precious these rays of mercy are! At the destruction of Sodom, God remembered Abraham and spared Lot according to the yearning that led Abraham to intercede. Lot, wife, and two daughters, were spared. One turns round when she ought not, and meets with judgment. Brethren! remember Lot's wife! God is merciful and compassionate often in the midst of judgment, but He looks for immediate obedience as the result. God anticipates; and He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" That was in judgment. Here in purest mercy 144,000 of Israel which had crucified their Messiah are guarded from grief; and then from among all nations an innumerable multitude are rescued for God and the Lamb.

In chapter 8 the last seal is opened. But ere the seven trumpet-angels can begin to call forth griefs, verses 2-5 shew that the Mediator must lay aside His intercession ere the griefs can come. The censer which in His hand carried up the prayers of saints (ver. 4) to God became, when filled with coals, from off the altar and cast to the earth, the signal of judgments come. The seven angels sound, one in each of the verses 7, 8, 10, 12, and limited judgments follow. At verse 13 it is said that the three last are woe trumpets.

These three are the fifth angel in chapter 9:1-12; Abaddon, destroyer (in Hebrew), and Apollyon, destroyer (in Greek), seem to mark the extensive range of the action here of the pit; and the sixth angel, verses 13-21; and the seventh hereafter.

All is shown thus far in heaven by the Lamb hidden in heaven; John is there too. Notice the distance from height above of the Lamb on the throne and the sphere on which the action tells, from chapter 6 to end of chapter 9. Most of it too is aggressive for the removal of what is evil, or the keeping of it in check.

But with chapter 10 the "messenger of the covenant" comes out; a mighty Messenger He. Weigh the description of Him, and see whether it is not, though under another display, the same person who appeared to John in vision in Patmos, as the Son of man of Daniel (chap. 7:7-14, 22), though with the insignia of the Ancient of days upon Him too; the same person who in Revelation v. is the Lamb in the midst of the throne and then opener of the seals; the same person who is the ONLY Mediator between God and man to offer up prayer, as found in chapter 8:3-5. This is His description: mighty angel or messenger come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow upon His head, His face as the sun, His feet as pillars of fire. A very little roll in His hand, open; who set His right foot on the sea and His left on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars, whereon seven thunders uttered their voices. John (who somehow was found come down to where sea and land were) was about to write, but a voice from heaven said, "Seal up the seven thunders and, utterances; write them not." And then the one standing on the sea and earth lifted up His hand to heaven, and swore by Him that lives forever and ever, the Creator of everything, that there should be no longer any delay, but in the days of the voice-of the seventh Angel, when He begins to sound, the Mystery of God shall be completed, as declared to His servants and prophets. (Compare chaps. 11:15 and 12:10.) And the voice which I heard from heaven (query, that in Patmos and that which afterward said Come up into heaven, chapter said, Go, take the very little roll which is open in the hand of the angel standing on the sea and on-the earth. John went and said to him, " Give me the very little roll." Take it, said he, and eat it. Embitter it will thy belly, though like honey it sweetens thy mouth. John obeyed and found it so—Thou must prophesy again, said he, before many peoples, and nations and tongues.

When the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" &c. (Gen. 18:16), He referred to His own visit of inspection of Sodom and Gomorrah. His confidence as to Abraham and the making him the confidant of His secrets, must have been very sweet to Abraham. But, in result, when Abraham found out what was at stake, Lot in the city threatened to be destroyed, it was bitter. But God remembered Abraham and saved Lot out of it. When John was told he was to be the one in whom the contents of the very little roll in the hand of the Messenger (Rev. 10.) was to be deposited, that must have been very sweet; but when he came to bear testimony about the new truth he had had revealed to him, he got the full taste of bitterness. Just so it was with the apostles, the privilege of having the Lord's instructions to them was sweet, the testimony about it brought very bitterness into the inward parts. See this also in Jeremiah.

Who is there of us who has not tasted the sweetness of the truth newly recovered since the Reformation? but when that was carried out into practice, even the privilege of having the scriptures, of justification through faith, of being under the condition of "Live and do," instead of being under that of "Do and live," it led to bitterness and trial.

Have you not found the enjoyment and sweetness to yourself of truth newly brought out for today, say of the contents of the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ? Well! sure I am, if you are trying to share it out to others, and avow you are trying to walk in this truth (as old as John's writing is, but revived anew in these days) and to be maintained by you as bringing truth to you which you must walk in and which lays its claim over all, you will know something of the bitterness referred to. Men do not get troubled by truth that is in creeds, &c. "Everybody," say they, "knows that, and each man must have his own opinion." But when truth is drawn first from God and His book-truth, too, perhaps, that involves the condemnation by God of the ways of the professing church and of the routines down here, it leads (as it always has led) to conflict; and, if we have and walk in the Spirit of Christ, to trial of heart within us.

From this onward we shall find that the vision is as to things upon earth, such as men's senses will be able to recognize when they take place and to read according to the prophets. For they are the subjects of divine interest on earth, until the judgment of the whore, &c. (Satan's wife and city); for Christ had been supplanted in what was nominally His holy habitation and espoused, and Satan, world, and flesh are openly to be judged in the corrupted thing. Then shall come the manifested presence of the Lamb in courts above, when the espoused, having first become bride, becomes the Lamb's wife. For Christendom is not Christianity. This was the religion of Christ and of His anointing power. Christendom is man's corruption of Christianity, such as there was previous to the Reformation. How far are we escaped from it, is a solemn question.

For instance, chapter 11. In the city, where also our Lord was crucified (ver. 8), John has to take accurate notice of the state of professing religion (as men speak), of the temple, altar, and worshippers; and of the Gentiles treading down the holy city forty-two months; of two witnesses for God, with the power and acts of Elias and Moses, prophesying in sackcloth twelve hundred and sixty days. " These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." (Ver. 4.) The wild beast from the bottomless pit slays them, to the delight of the nations, but they are called from heaven up into heaven, and ascend on a cloud in sight of their enemies, and an earthquake follows.

There is something here to take notice of as to the seventh trumpet: verse 14 states, "The second woe is past; behold, the third woe comes quickly." (This refers to chapter 8:13: "Woe, woe, woe to the dwellers on the earth, by reason of the voices, of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound." This warning, too, had been given in a way to command universal attention, even by an angel (some read an eagle) flying in mid-heaven.) "And (ver. 15) there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders which sat before God on their thrones, fell on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, the existing one, and the was (and who art to come, or the coming one); because thou hast taken thy great power, and reigned. And the nations were wrathful, and thine anger is come, &c. And the dwelling-place of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of his covenant was seen, and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." Nothing, as it seems to me, could mark more strongly the awful state of earth, and those who in spirit were dwellers on it, than that the announcement of God's kingdom being just set up, should come out under the last woe-trumpet; nothing could mark more strongly the contrast between God's people and the citizens of this world. "Who art to come," if it stands, would mean just about to come. We get the same contrast confirmed, though in a somewhat different way, on the casting out of the heavenlies of the arch-foe

and his angels (chap. 12:12); "And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night.... Therefore rejoice, heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them. Woe to the earth, and to the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time."

Let me remark also here the need which there is for you to study the ways of God. Many, from want of this, suppose that in the same moment that God takes a matter in hand, it is accomplished and ended. Whatsoever He takes in hand He is able to accomplish, and will do so, but in His own time and way. But where His word takes the form of promise, there must be hope, and patience, and suffering for us to pass through. He acts thus, and forms in us a character and ways in accordance with His own and Christ's, which Christ displayed in His life. The wild-ass character (which was ours by nature) is not the character which will do for the glory; it was not Christ's character either. In the eternal redemption and salvation, God, so to speak, never makes haste. And in which of the temporal deliverances and salvations did He make haste? His own word, once given, is sure. But He will accomplish it in His own way and time (the very best) to those that receive and stay themselves on it.

Chapter 12. An old nation appears anew upon earth. Her origin was seen in heaven.⁸ Her symbols there were according to what Joseph had dreamed. (Gen. 37:5-11.) He who is now on the throne was owned as her son and king of Israel, though the red dragon sought to destroy, him. The hosts of light, Michael and his angels, fight with the dragon and his angels, and he is cast down. (The great dragon was that old serpent, called devil and Satan, deceiver of the whole habitable earth. He is cast down with his angels. He had been in heavenly, places with his principalities and powers. For as soon as Christ was there, Intercessor, and Anchor, and Forerunner, within the veil, he must needs be there antagonistically as accuser, day and night, before God. The accuser of "our brethren" may be the recognition of those' whom grace owned as such relatively to Christ and His heavenly saints. But they were among the victors, for the sake of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony; and they had not loved their lives unto death.) He persecutes the woman and her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.

The scene shifts now, out of heaven to earth, to where sea and land are.

Chapter 13. A wild-beast kingdom appears, denying God as ruler over all, and as solo object of worship, and blaspheming all in heaven. Verse 11: A lamb-like beast, with two horns, comes in to assist him—an idol-maker, murderer, and forbidding to buy or sell save to those that had the mark, or name, or number of the wild beast.

Chapter 14. The Lamb appears on Mount Zion with a remnant of Israel. Beautiful and bright is this parenthesis of mercy, verses 1-5. "And I looked, and lo! the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as of a great thunder: and the voice I heard of harpers, harping with their harps; and they sung a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; no one could learn that song save the hundred and forty-four thousand bought from the earth. These are they which have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These have been bought from among men, a first-fruit to God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found," &c.

If any one asks me, To what detail does this refer? I should answer, I know not. If any one added, Then it is no use your reading it, or my hearing it; I should reply (as lately to one), The portion is full of blessed instruction to my soul.

First of all, the Lamb is in the scene; and so, to one espoused to Him, it must be of interest. Secondly, He is on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand of the nation who declared it would have no king but Caesar. Thirdly, (His name and) His Father's name is borne aloft by each upon his forehead. What grace, what rich love is here! Again, hark, the voice is out from heaven, loudly sounding as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunders, yet withal the melodious, gladsome, joy of harpers harping on their harps. An unknown song is sung, but it is before the throne, and royal priesthood, and living creatures. The power to sing it is a distinctive privilege of a class redeemed from the earth. Without any mark of creature enjoyment, even of the providence of God in nature, pure, they follow the Lamb. whithersoever He goes; a kind of firstfruits from among men to God and to the Lamb; guileless they and true.

And is it not a scene (as indeed all of these) on which we shall look down from heaven when it takes dace? And we are told of it now!

The wretched elder brother, in the parable in Luke 15, was angry when he heard music, and dancing. The-returned prodigal was the subject of the joy in which Abba's heart and his slaves' joy (in having such a master) found its vent. It is selfishness to turn from such scenes; poverty in grace! not to know how to glory in the expression of the Lamb and His Father's character, because we find a scene wherein their grace outsteps the knowledge and understanding we possess. Peter, with all his prejudices against mercy to the Gentiles, and the saints of Jerusalem likewise (after they had heard of what God had wrought) preferred welcoming those that had obtained like grace with themselves to the turning from it. But, alas! the narrow-heartedness which cannot rise-above self, to joy in the joy of others, even when Abba and the Lamb are seen blessing the undeserving. Amid the black darkness around (ver. the everlasting gospel; 9 verse 8, the fall of Babylon; verse 14, the Son of man, and a sickle in his hand, reaped the harvest of the earth; and, verse 17, then an angel gathers the vine of the earth for judgment.

Chapter 15. Seven angels, with the seven last plagues; verses 2-4, the victors over the beast stand on the sea of glass before God, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! How blessed! And what of the song of Moses and the Lamb? Ere the seven angels who had the seven golden vials, full of the wrath of God, emptied out their vials, John writes:

I saw a glass sea, mingled with fire, and those who were overcomers of the wild beast and its, image, and the number of its name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are thy works, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai righteous and true are thy ways, O King of nations [the best manuscripts read nations, and not saints]. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy? for all nations shall come and worship thee, for thy righteousnesses have been made manifest."

The sea in the temple was for cleansing and purity; the one here, being: of glass, spewed that it was fixed and abiding, mingled with fire, as expressing judicial trials. But the victorious over-comers of the wild beast, blasphemer of God, as king and object of worship, had their stand upon it—and harps, and they sung the song of Moses, the servant, who brought Israel triumphantly with, the outstretched arm of Jehovah (see Ex. 15.) and of the Lamb, who, through His own obedience unto death, and His resurrection, was the author of eternal redemption and salvation. Wonder-struck with the works and ways of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, King of nations, to be feared and glorified; as holy; for all nations should come and worship before Him, they sing.

Subjection to God, patience, and God's power, will work temporal deliverances even in that time. But for eternal redemption and salvation, when the arch-foe's power is filling the wild beast, the death and resurrection of the Lamb are needed for victory. It may be that both millennial and eternal blessing are present to the minds of these over-comers who have, through fire, gotten their rest where the purity of God will be their safe rest.

Chapter 16. The seven vials of God's wrath, verses 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12 (the Euphrates, and the three unclean, frog-like spirits out of the mouths of the dragon, and of the beast, and of the false prophet, &c.); verse 17, it is done, &c.

Next comes Babylon's destiny. What is Babylon? is a question common enough. I would say a few words upon it, according to the measure Of my light. The city and tower built in the plain of Shinar, where the Lord confounded their language, and scattered them abroad, were the first things called Babel, or confusion. (Gen. 11:1-9.) The confusion in their conduct was in the pride which. led them to seek to make themselves a name, and to make a center for themselves on earth, mistrusting God, lest they should be scattered. Their speech confounded, they were scattered.

Nebuchadnezzar's strange confusion of mind and actions, when God had raised him up, and set him in supreme power above Israel, is easily seen in Daniel 1-4, and his confounding, in chapter 5:18-21.

But in the Revelation Babylon is, to the system in connection with which it is found, as Babylon of Daniel was to the system in connection with which it stood. The church found in the Apocalypse as the bride and wife of the Lamb, is also looked at as the city of habitation of God and the Lamb. Babylon also is previously looked upon as a corrupt, lascivious woman, and as a city of habitation. That it will have in the end a connection with the nations on earth, which, until overthrown, will do what they can to hinder Jerusalem and Israel, is clear to anyone reading chapters 17 and 18. But, as I judge, these hindrances will be from that in which Christendom results, after that which is Christianity ceases to be on earth. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (chap. 18:4), is to be noted. Christianity broke down ere Paul died (see 2 Tim.), &c. The evil of Christendom appeared very early (just as did the sins of Israel in the calf), even in apostolic days. This was in mercy, for it enabled God to give us, through Peter, James, Jude, Paul, and John, instruction for ourselves as to the evil. In Christianity, the church which was in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, dwelt in spirit in heaven, and walked in the Holy Spirit down here as Christ had walked.

The most fruitful and least suspected root of evil corruption, was in confusing civil power in the world (that is, Caesar not bearing the sword in vain), and the power in the church (that is, Christ acting in the church, through faith and the Holy Spirit). The systems are two, and not one: government of God on earth, and Caesar the ruler, on the one hand; and, on the other, worship of God in heaven, and the Holy Spirit, the vicar of Christ, among the heavenly saints down here. The nominal church became worldly and selfish, and. claimed the world; but Constantine came in with imperial power, and (though Pontifex, chief priest of heathenism) took the place of being head of the bishops and the church. The bishops watched their time, and got for themselves and their world-church the upper places in the world. Their language-then became, "I sit a queen, and am no widow (which she should have been, 1 Tim. 5:5, 6), and shall see no sorrow." (Rev. 18:7.) This went on till the Reformation, when kings and princes threw off the tyranny, and professed to become "nursing fathers" to the church. These are facts, at all events; and as results have told out through centuries the ruin of the professing church. Civil power is of God, for time and on the earth. Christ. set up at Pentecost a church for eternity and heaven; and therefore, as it had commenced, it was to be now (that is, in time) that which lived in heaven. To blend, or try to blend, the two distinct and opposite things in one, was to make a new system, and a system of confusion. The Greek and Roman churches apply Babylon to all that is not of themselves; for instance, to all sects and heresies, and to Protestantism, with its subdivisions innumerable. Protestants return the compliment, and apply Babylon to the Romish church. I dare do neither. But of this I am sure, that the so-called religion of 1876 is part of Christendom, and is not of Christianity; if so be that this was formed through Peter, and Paul, and John, and is described by them in the scriptures written since Pentecost. "The church" now is an honorable profession in the world, doomed by the word of God to be destroyed. But the principles, as given by God, and a heavenly people to be formed by Him for the new Jerusalem as city and bride have not dropped out of His mind; and if the professing church and the churches have become worldly, sensual, and devilish, there are yet those as individuals who are victors and over-comers, who walk with God, and are led by Him to own, and seek to act upon, all the principles of truth, as laid down through Peter, and John, and Paul. And I beseech you, be you, beloved hearers, among the number of such.

Who of you, my hearers, could tell me, What is the last link with the world which you severed? or what was the last piece of the world which you gave up?

In chapter 17 we have Babylon as the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, and her judgment as a woman.

In chapter 18 her judgment as a city; the lament of kings, merchants, &c., small and great on the earth; but (ver. 20 onwards) as subject of joy to apostles and prophets and to the mind of heaven.

Immediately upon her fall we have chapter xix. praise for her judgment, "I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Alleluia (praise ye Jah!), salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." (Vers. 1, 2.)

And verse 3, a second time they (in heaven) said Alleluia; and her smoke rose up forever and ever.

Then verse 4, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures take their distinctive parts, and fall down and worship God, who sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia.

Next verse 5, a voice came out of the throne "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great."

And then, responsive, the voice of a great multitude (ver. 6), adding to their praise for the judgment on the whore and those corrupted by her. Two other subjects of joy. First, "For the Lord God Almighty has taken to himself the kingly power," (this underlays the judgment); and, secondly, the second part of this (His actual reigning): "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready." (Ver. 7.)

What words are these? "The Lamb and his wife¹⁰ who has made herself ready!" Once (as now) the espoused; at His coming the bride expectant; and then, in the scene before us, owned as His wife. With what severity of simplicity as to attire is hers when thus looked at, as about to be presented to Himself by the Lord. Habited according to Himself, such then His taste for her; and her taste for His sake. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints."

As the city she will have what is glorious to those below, and to those around her, but as the wife how severely chaste her dress, and how it tells out His mind

The marriage supper of the Lamb¹¹ is announced and the blessedness of all called there as guests.¹² These are the true sayings of God: let God be true and every man a liar, is what John (in his simplicity, in which even then he would ignorantly have worshipped an angel, and we in our condition still lower than he) may well say, each for himself. Poor things! to be so blessed already in Him and to have such prospects securely ours for hereafter: yes, securely our own. For these are the true sayings of God. Amen and Amen.

To close—the outline of this second section of the book seems to me to be very simple. It is about the Lamb in the throne in Heaven and His servant in spirit in heaven too. First the Lamb is hidden in the throne. (chap. 4.) Then chapter 5. He is displayed in it, and takes the place of communicating to His servants things about to come to pass: namely, first the checks to sinful men on earth and displays of mercy in the midst of judgment, and repressive actings as to evil, chapters 6 to 9. With chapter 10 more light is given, for His servant has a testimony to render. And chapter 11 The state of religious profession on earth in the Holy Land, and the wickedness of the Gentiles come out to light. In chapter 12 how a nation, known of old but which had ceased to have a land, is suddenly found again. The twelve tribes -whence come they? In chapter 13 a wild beast kingdom and a false prophet are in open and avowed opposition to God and His rights. Chapter 14, 15 tell of mercy (and, through it of victory) amid judgments. In chapter 16 we have warnings; and in chapters 17, 18 judgments on the whore and city of the earth. And in chapter 19 the joy of heaven and the marriage of the Lamb.

Plainly, we His people shall be with Him, the seal and witness of His love. We shall have Himself in courts above, win Him when the outside circle of wickedness is broken, and ere the heads of evil are removed.

Hearers! may I ask what principle is now regulating your lives? How clear is the golden thread of God's purposes and plans about Christ! But are we walking according to them. Could I, could you, be in the company of a Peter, a John, a Paul, as they were when on earth, without any fear of being as a speckled bird in their society? Can you heartily invite Christ to come? Would the life you are leading amalgamate with His in the glory, and if He came to-night would naught cease but the difficulties with which you are in conflict? If so, you can say, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The Coming Kingdom: An Outline of the Revelation, Lecture 1 (15:20-28)

(1 Cor. 15:20-28; Hymn 140 (vers. 2, 3, 4); Prayer; Hymn 179.1) Revelation 1-3.

I have been asked to lecture here on "The Coming Kingdom." I do so gladly, depending upon God, in His grace, for ability, and for guidance and power. A first remark, however, may be, that I dread lest we should forget the unity of truth whilst examining any portion of it, and so be misled by having taken a part out of, and away from, its place of connection with the rest. To explain what I mean, I will give an instance of this, and one which has led to many practical evils.

Some have spoken about the gospel, and written about it, merely as it bears upon a sinner when he first believes, as though the forgiveness of sins were all that it contained. To look at the gospel in this way takes up but one point connected with -it, and that in itself a little one, namely, how it suits the sinner dead in trespasses and sins, if he -receives it; and this, too, is on its lowest and least important side of blessing, that is, guilty man's side; and, further, I may ask (if I speak of what suits a fallen man), has the gospel no other blessing for such an one? God's side of it presents it as a whole, in its own proper importance (not to me, or any individual sinner, in his or her selfishness, all-important as it is to such, but) to God, and to the whole universe under Him; for thus it reveals God in His eternal being and character,. His joy in the Son of His love, in three displays, of Him; firstly, in humiliation unto death, the, death of the cross—He suffering; secondly, in heaven now (between the suffering and the glory yet to come), forgiver of sins, and giver of eternal life and the Holy Spirit to all who own and bow down to Him—He now in patience, while waiting for His foes to be made His footstool; and, thirdly, He in displayed glory when He comes a second time as Son of man; coming out from the glory of God to take the kingdom, and bring forth new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness, shall dwell. No suffering to Him then, nor to those that are His—no more need of patience than He will reign first in the kingdom; whether. his court, and the bride (now become the Lamb's wife), be looked at as on high, or whether the kingdom upon earth be considered. Reigning, He will put down all enemies—Satan (and rebellions men with him, their chosen head and master) must go into the lake of fire—death be swallowed up in victory, and finally the new heavens and new earth come into being.

This (God's display of His Son in humiliation, and then in patience, and then, as resulting from these, in glory) is God's gospel. And here the "humiliation, and the patience. . . and the glory of Him, who is God manifest in flesh, stand out as a unity. It is the revelation of the being and

character of God Himself—shows His delight in Christ, into which delight the believer can enter, through faith and by the Spirit, but the believer only. No other man's works, or doings, or sufferings have been from or for God, or have a claim upon God; none other than He has shared, or over can share, the throne of God; none other has been endowed with authority to forgive sin, to give eternal life, even now; none other has waited to be gracious. But to Him, Jesus, all power in heaven and in earth is given, and all glory shall be given.

To turn now to my thesis "The Coming Kingdom." I might separate the coming kingdom from that which leads into it, and from that to which it leads. I should then have to give you from every part of scripture such portions as refer to it, and to fix each portion in its right place. This would take for granted that I had a very thorough knowledge of the Bible, and that you all likewise had so mastered its contents, as to be able to say whether or not my application of these scriptures showed that I had been taught of God. Instead of supposing so much to be true, it will be more humble and happy to choose some one portion of scripture, and endeavor to examine what it says. That scripture remains always open in our hands, and before us, and if, instead of attempting to explain every verse of it, God gives me to help you as to the meaning of some one or two only of the more important parts, you will each of you be a gainer, and any mistake that I may make be more easily perceived by you.

I have selected, therefore, the last book in our Bible—the Revelation—as that which we may look at together.

Read with me the first three verses of the first chapter, and verses 6 and 7 of the last chapter.

(1) "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: (2) Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, [and] of all things that he saw. (3) Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." And chapter 22:6, 7. "These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord, God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

Observe how these five verses bear upon those who do not study this book. Can I say, as their practice implies, it is not a revelation, or uncovering of things (which man's mind never could have discovered), which God gave unto Jesus Christ to show unto His servants, things which must shortly come to pass. Surely, if there be a covering anywhere, it must be over the hearts and minds of those who cannot, and will not, see what God says He has uncovered, and revealed, and given to Jesus to show to His servants. It is the book that shows part of what Jesus has been doing since He went to heaven, and what He is about to do, and Himself is the One to show it all to His servants. Care you not for such divine grace? despise you such service of Christ? If so, are you a servant of His?

God has shown that which will shortly come to pass. Now, man is naturally a great planner for what is to be the future down here, and the knowledge of God's plan for the future is a fine antidote to man's planning and plans; and "shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" (Gen. 18:17) contains one of God's ways in His actings with the members of the household of faith, as much as with the father of the faithful. If the things which must shortly come to pass are known to you, and abide with you, the flesh will be judged; the world spoiled to you, and its engrossing power over the natural mind broken by the very hopes of the coming glory, and the vista of grace which leads up to it. John in Patmos, outcast from his much-loved sphere of work among saints, was the first who enjoyed the privilege of this book; and his exile was the Lord's time for giving to all His people the chart for the troubled wilderness which lay between John, when in Patmos, and the new heavens and new earth. A troubled wilderness it is, but with bright illuminations of God's ways, and of Christ's presence with His people right on to the end—an end whose bright and gladdening light may be seen all through the journey, and by each individual who makes it.

And notice the peculiar blessing to the student: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear... and keep (or treasure up) the sayings of the prophecy of this book." See also chapter 22:7, "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

Note it, He does not say, "Blessed is he who understands," &c., but blessed is he who reads, or hears read, and keeps the sayings of the book. He, if there be but one, as in John's case when in Patmos, has the blessing.

As we look through the book together, you will, I trust, see with me that the Revelation is no trackless-ocean, nor is it without some of the most blessed springs of sweet water, nor without fruits of the tree of life, for our use!

The book, as given by God, and as spread out before us down here, is divided into parts, or sections. The leading truth in each part naturally (according to God) was according to the actions of Christ during the times it treats of. What more according to God than that His beloved Son, and the actions of His Son—the Christ—should be treated of in each part of the stream of time, from Patmos to the new heavens and new earth being set up! And, consequently, in the account given of these actings, the places or scenes of such actings are brought before us. And what more natural (in the new nature, and to the Spirit of God) than that the servant's mind should be there where the Master is acting! "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."

The three-ply thread of gold, which is to faith its clue through the book, is the blessed Lord Himself in His actings, and the scenes of these, and the mind of His servant there, through the Spirit.

The Revelation contains God's chart, or stream of time, for John, from Patmos to the end of time. The Christ is seen in it in action; whether first in judging the seven candlesticks, from chapter 1 to 3—which was seen by John in a vision, as if all was in Patmos—and the Lord there as Son of man in the glories of the Ancient of Days.

Or, secondly, when in spirit John was caught up into heaven, and found that the Lamb, who had been hidden in the midst of the throne, was opening out all that He upon the throne would do in providence to prepare for Israel's getting back to the land, and the power of the Gentiles being set aside. From chapter v. to the end of chapter ix. in heaven, Himself acting, though unseen by men, and nothing that mere men on earth could understand, it being seen as flowing from Him. From chapter 10 to 19, verse 10, there is a description of the things upon earth for which He had been so acting, but at the time when they will stand out to man's eye upon earth; and both these parts—the preparation for the end, and the beginning of the end (visible to man)—all of it, so to speak, and understood by John; ending with the triumph in heaven.

Thirdly, Himself comes out of heaven to put down His foes openly, and to set up a kingdom, upon earth. He brings His court with Him, and (wondrous word) the Lamb's wife in the court, above of the kingdom, which is to be upon earth below (compare Isa. 4:4-6 and Rev. 21:2, 3, 10); and finally sets up the new heavens and new earth, wherein righteousness is to dwell, pure and unmixed, forever.

If the Revelation were printed on one side of a large sheet of paper, and I then divided it into three parts—

The first part (A) would end with chapter 3.

The second part (B) would end with chapter 19:10.

The third part (C) would end with the book.

(A) would contain both the introduction to the book, and the actings of the Son of man seen by John, as if He had come down into Patmos, and was seen by him there as judging the churches. (B) would embrace the whole period in which the Lord (His resting-place in patience still in heaven) is acting, first, in providence, to remove barriers out of the way; and then openly, to bring out to light and sight on earth the beginning of the end, and the actual preparations for earthly glory; and (C) would contain the open manifestations of Himself; the kingdom in its twofold parts, heavenly and earthly; and after that, the eternal state; and then the conclusion of the book, or prophecy.

Peter, James, and John saw the transfiguration of the Lord on the mount. Peter wrote about it as an eye-witness. (2 Pet. 1:16-21.) They saw it for us, in like manner John, when in Patmos, had a stream of time—God's stream about the Son of man and the Lamb, and of that which would roll out under the hand of Christ, as Son of man, or the Lamb. John saw it all in broad outline, and John wrote it down for us. And the Holy Spirit, who inspired John to write it, is with us, to enable us to profit from it, each for him or her self. But in order to do this we must be simple and childlike, and not carry our own thoughts into the book, but bring forth God's mind as expressed in it.

Keep your eye upon Christ Himself, and see where He is, and what He is doing, as you read the book. This will light to your intelligence, and will give warmth to your heart, as well as strength to your conscience, and purpose of heart to be a doer of His will. Christ a living person, in whatsoever glories shown, for me as sole clue through the book! Take seals, or trumpets, or vials, &c., as due—if I see, the Living One who gives all these their power, I can be satisfied to wait till many of the details explain themselves by their accomplishment; for the word of God accomplishes itself. But I live upon Christ now.

I take, then, now this roll of the stream of time, as to the revelation of Jesus Christ as Son of man, and as the Lamb. It has three cords across it, binding up its length into three parts. I loose the first of them, and it unrolls down to the end of the third chapter. I read it prayerfully, and say the golden thread that runs through it is my Lord, as Son of man, in the glory of the Ancient of Days, come down from above, and standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. And there He expresses His unfailingly correct estimate of how far they had answered the purpose He had in lighting them. His mind comes out to and in His servant John. All this in a vision in Patmos. And (may I not add?) gracious the love which shews me the Lord in this, to me, His new position; surely Himself therein, will give me the light of intelligence, and feed my soul with His glory. The apparent nearness of the One in action to that about and on which He is acting, and the full entrance of the mind of John into all this, should be noticed.

But remark verses 4 and 5— "which is, and which was, and which is to come"— (or the existing one, and the was, and the coming One). How different from the title, Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father and God through Him! (John 20:17.)

Again, "the seven spirits which are before the throne." How different from the titles of the Spirit, the Unction, Life-giving, the Seal, the Earnest, and Comforter, as we know Him!

And again, and "Jesus Christ, as the Faithful Witness, first-begotten from the dead, and Prince of the kings of the earth." How different from that which John's faith gives out the moment he sees Him, according to the glories in Christ, as displayed in the eternal redemption and everlasting salvation of a people for heaven! "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood:" the enjoyed fruits of His love acting in mercy and compassion. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;" rich grace to us, in having set us in relationship with Himself, who is Head of all government and worship! And, lastly, the privilege and power of praise; "to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen," expressing both the mind of the Holy Spirit, and the desire of the disciple's heart.

Verse 4, and the first part of 5, give us glories divine of God, and of the Spirit, and of Jesus Christ as connected with earth. But John (latter part of verse 5, and verse 6) takes up glories divine, but as connected with himself, and those that are for heaven and eternity—known and enjoyed blessings.

The Emperor may have been allowed to stop John's work in the churches, and was allowed (led by Satan) to thrust him into solitude, to the very point where the Son of man meant to meet him, and to give to him the new service of writing the guide-book for His people, through time, until the end. The glories of the Son of man, here as the Ancient of Days, are awe-inspiring; but they are not difficult to understand, at least not the titles or the insignia. John fell (ver. 17) at His feet as dead! But He graciously laid His right hand upon him, saying, "Fear not;" and then He names some of His own glories, as the answer to all that His servant could fear. "I am the first and the last; the Living One, and who became dead; and, lo! I am living for evermore, and have the keys of death and of the unseen world." And then (ver. 19) he claims John's service for Himself and the churches. To John, and to everyone that serves, how precious that service, and the love that formed it!

The mind of man works upon the things of man, but where the Spirit of God is, there that which God's word reveals is received in simplicity, just as "it is written." And sure I am that anyone of us that has the Spirit and mind of God can receive what He has written, and if we compare scripture with scripture, we shall soon discover thus more than we can find time to communicate one to the other.

In chapters 2, 3 we have the seven churches named, in the midst of which John had seen (chap. 1:13) the Son of man. They were seen as around Him, Himself in their midst: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea. Seven churches selected as embodying all those failures which the Lord knew were contrary to His own mind, and all that would be found in any church, unto the end of

there being any such on earth. These seven churches, I do not doubt, give all the phases of carelessness, weakness, haughtiness, evil in false doctrine, and in false profession, dependence, and independence, of all parts of the whole nominal church.

If I sit down and read ecclesiastical history, and study all the phases that have appeared in the churches, from the beginning down to the present time, as near the end, I find then the value of the Lord's wisdom in having selected the above seven, and the order of the moral evil in the church, as a whole, upon earth is marked by the order in which the seven candlesticks are placed.

Each of these addresses has insignia⁴ in which severally the Lord appeared.

2. The First and the Last, which became dead, and lived. (Ver. 8.)

3. He which has the sharp sword with two edges. (Ver. 12.)

4. The Son of God, who has His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass. (Ver. 18.)

5. He that possesses the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. (Chap. 3:1.)

6. He that is holy, He that is true, He that has the key of David, He that opens, and no one Shuts, and shuts, and no one opens. (Ver. 7.)

7. The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. (Ver. 14.)

Seven insignia or signs about, or in Him, possessed by Himself alone! Precious glories of the Son of man, here in the glory of the Ancient of Days!

Each assembly has the Lord's estimate of it given.⁵ Each has words of caution, consolation, and admonition, rebuke, warning, comfort, &c., fitting to its state, given. Each too has promissory communications made to it, calculated to make any believer become a victor or overcomer (who of you are overcomers?) Works, whether good or bad, are noticed.

There is to each of these addresses an internal consistency in all its several parts, one with the other, which makes it impossible to transfer one part from one address to another, without disturbing the internal harmony of both. The promise are as full as such a Giver might give.

The one that is an overcomer:⁶ 1, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in thy paradise of God. (Chap. 2:7.) 2, Shall not be hurt by the second death. (Ver. 11.) 3, To him will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no one knows, saving he that receives it.. (Ver. 17.) 4, To him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father and I will give him the Morning Star. (Ver. 26-28.) 5, we shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels. (Chap. 3:5.) 6, Will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and my new name. (Ver. 12.) 7, To him will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. (Ver. 21.) What a giver He! and how gracious the way in which he cheers on to victory.

1. EPHESUS, the primitive church left her first love. (Chap. 2: 4.) No diligence in candlestick duties (and there was much therein which He praised) could compensate to the Son of man for the want of personal love to Himself. It was Paul's freshness of love to the Lord, which, from the beginning to the end, so characterized him, amid all his much service; and which alas, had waned in His beloved Ephesians! "Thou hast left thy first love." This was the church in her first declension.⁷

2. Smyrna had most taste in her experience of fellowship with Christ in His rejection by the world, though the reason of the experience was different. As to the church it was by persecution that the Lord preserved a weak people, from the world which crucified Him (the Lord) because He was unwavering, strong and true to God alone. This was the second estate of the church.

3. Pergamos, the third experience of the church, brought with it Constantine, the emperor, usurping a place of power over the church.

4. Thyatira, the fourth phase, gives us Jezebel's history over again. She who had no right to any place in the kingdom usurped power to establish false worship.

5. Sardis comes next as a fifth, when the kings of the earth took the place of being nursing fathers to the church—a name to live, but no life.

6. Philadelphia, the sixth is fully filled up by the Lord Himself.

7. Laodicea had a very good opinion of itself and its attainments; very like what we see now.

Study Christ as He set Himself forth in Patmos and amid the seven churches: John saw it all, and wrote it all for all his fellow-servants that they might know it.

The Christ—born of a virgin, and growing up, and seen to have been in retirement from youth

till about thirty years of age; in testimony and teachings, and in all the beautiful ways of His own, amid the activities of His life here below; on the cross, in His marvelous death, and buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea; but who burst the grave and came forth leading captivity captive, is the Christ whom I commend to you. That Person first in those circumstances of humiliation. Yes, but stop not thou in those circumstances, He is not there now—the mosque of Mahomet has supplanted in that land the temple of Jehovah. Nor is He still lingering on earth as He once did forty days, to show that He marked well the state of all things in the beloved city, and to counsel and cheer His apostles: for whom when He was risen from among the dead, He yet lingered forty days, but then ascended, while they saw Him go up; and after that (Phil. 2:6-11) He took His seat on high. Mark the "wherefore" of verse 9, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,

"wherefore" God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus (which was His name as known among men) every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and on earth, and infernal: and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

Study Himself there, in His actings at Pentecost (Acts 2.), Forgiver of sins, and Giver of the Holy Spirit to repentant sinners in Jerusalem. Study Himself in the martyrdom, of Stephen (chap. 7.); and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (chap. 9.) and his mission (chap. 13.) at Antioch, and his apostleship as Paul. Study Him in the Hebrews, in the heavenly calling, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in the mystery: study Him where you will, but whatever you do, do not forget to study Him in the Apocalypse, book of His glorious power, and coming, and of the glorious manifestations to come, on earth and in heaven; first, as suppressing all evil, and reigning over the earth; and finally, in the new heavens and new earth. For God will have this twofold glory as fruit of the humiliation, patience, and power of the Son of man, Jehovah's fellow. (Zech. 13:7; 11:13.)

I beseech and entreat each of you to have and to hold Christ Himself as the test of yourself, and all your ways: as the touchstone by which worldliness can be discovered; and (as He is in the book which we are studying) the great responsibility-bearer before God, as to the profession of religion on earth, and as to the fulfillment hereafter of all promises to the Jews, and the Gentiles, as well as to the church of God. (1 Cor. 10:32.)

It may not be amiss to add a few remarks now upon the light which this first part of the book sheds upon some of the leading ecclesiastical notions of the day.

Man from the time he lost his innocence, with it lost his first estate, he was turned also out of Eden a spoiled thing. From that time downward, his tendency and business have (alas!) been to spoil everything he can; and this often through the delusion that he is competent to improve upon what God has done!

Men tell us that the church as set up round. Peter, apostle of the circumcision, at Pentecost, is to stand forever, and to bring in a spiritual millennium; and that nothing in it may be altered until the Lord takes the great white throne. The Jews held much the same thoughts about the Mosaic economy; and were stumbled by the Lord's coming first in humility, ere He came in glory; just as now, men are stumbled by the statement of the truth that the churches—Christendom—will certainly be judged by Him, because of its failure as to the truth entrusted to it, and the position in which grace placed it as to heavenly truth, as much as Jewdom failed of old, as to truth about earthly things.

But, if the church at Jerusalem was everything, and the source of all power, and was to abide continually,—why was there to be another apostle (Paul, apostle of the uncircumcision), and another site, Antioch, set forth? Who transgressed man's notions, even with a Philip in Samaria, and as to the eunuch of Candace of Ethiopia (Acts 8:5, 27)? It was the Lord Himself. Who used Peter, as to Cornelius and his household (chap. 10.) contrary to his own, and Jerusalem Christians' prejudices? It was the Lord!! Who chose a new-witness, a Hellenist, chosen to be apostle of the uncircumcision, endowed him, and sent him out from Antioch without his deriving any one thing through, Jerusalem? It was the Lord. And Paul was witness, not of Christ risen from the dead merely, but of Christ ascended up on high and giving gifts to men! Christ Jesus on earth formed Peter, and (when risen from the dead) sent down from heaven the Holy Spirit to him: Christ ascended up into glory, turned Saul into Paul, and the Holy Spirit sent him out from among his praying brethren, and fellow-servants at Antioch, together with Barnabas, who afterward dropped off from Paul.

Paul, be it remarked, had to modify, after that failure had set in, the conditions of fellowship here on earth. At first, himself full of faith, and of the Holy Spirit, and preaching (what he had learned in his own conversion) an ascended and glorified Christ as Son of God—those that seemed to cleave to Him and walk with Him Paul owned, and fully associated himself with them. But when evil had set in, and become established, we find him writing to Timothy, after telling of Hymenaeus, and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17), he adds, Nevertheless the foundation of God stands firm (or fixed) having this seal, The Lord knows those being His; and let everyone that names the Lord's name stand aside from iniquity. (2 Tim. 2:19.) How is a man to be meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work? "Flee youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them, that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." And this is confirmed in chapter 3, in which he bids Timothy Turn away from those who have the form of godliness but deny the power of it; just as Protestants did en masse at the Reformation.

John's line of truth differed from Peter's or Paul's, though the doctrine of all of them concurred together to form one whole. The Father's family, possessing the eternal life in and through the Son of God, in John's epistles; the Son of man as Ancient of days in the Apocalypse judging false-profession in chapters 1 to 3; and the Lamb in the midst of the throne of the Lord God Almighty in chapter 5 &c. And, note it, it was God who, without reference to Peter or Paul, opened the fresh truth in the Apocalypse!

Again, the man-made religion of fallen human nature denies that pardon and acceptance can be known until the great white throne has been sat upon; but John (chap. 1:5, 6) knew his own forgiveness and that of the "us," knew also our relationship with and under Christ, as part of the royal priesthood. And so, naturally, he and we cease from occupation with our leanness, our leanness, to be occupied with praise and ascription of glory and dominion to the Lord.

Again, ecclesiastical views never see the tender faithfulness of the Lord, as towards John, when he fell at His feet as dead or the solemn and awful truth of judgment of false profession being in the Lord's mind, however long He may linger in long, suffering patience.

Again, as Protestants did well to escape from the evil of the nominal church at the Reformation, (though many nowadays are inclined to turn back to it and traditional religion, so building again the things which they had destroyed) yet we have two very remarkable things in each of the seven churches. First, Christ's estimate of it as a thing He had examined; and secondly, His command, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Did they, or any of them, repent and get restoration? Which of the seven? And where is it? If none escaped, faith in me, if I have an ear to hear, knows that the Lord's visitation of them ends in His spueing them all out of His mouth. I am, we are, under Christ who has judged the churches and Christendom and given us His estimate of them.

Compare Israel in Moses' or Solomon's days with Israel in the Lord's days, alas! the contrast is not so fearful as that which the comparison of the Pentecostal church (Acts 2, 4.) and Christendom of our own day gives us.

God's counsel and plan and the value of the work of Christ stand forever, and those who through faith and the Spirit are connected therewith most surely have as individuals everlasting life now: for they are part of the espoused, the bride expectant of Christ. But, as to the present enjoyment, and standing upon earth of anything like a candlestick, such a thing cannot be found anywhere. But there is One, who is faithful amid unfaithfulness, and who can, and will keep that which we have committed to Him.

He remembers who wrote, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." (Mal. 3:16, 17.)

And He did remember His Zacharias and Elizabeths; His Annas and Simeons; His Marys too, and Josephs: just as He had remembered His Enochs and Noahs. We may be assured of this, and count upon Himself as John did. Yea! May I not say, such a meeting as this is the proof that He has not forgotten to be gracious in our day?

May the Lord be with you and bless all that God knows to be His; bless them in the knowledge of this book of the Revelation, and help us to profit from it!

Memorials of the Ministry of G.V. Wigram 1: Volume 1, Lord's Supper, The (11:26)

1 Cor. 11:26

When the Lord instituted the supper His own death was future, and the Holy Ghost not yet given, and the disciples could not understand what it meant. When He gave it to Paul for us (v. 23), His death was finished, and His resurrection had declared its value; for He was on high, able to give gifts, and pour out blessings upon His people down here.

It is well to recall to our minds what the meaning of this supper is, and what we do when we partake of it. We have now again broken the bread, and drank of the cup; and what has that meant? We have shown the Lord's death, and this will go on until He come. Death is an awful thing, and man does not like to think of it. It is the king of terrors to man; it is the wages of sin, the ending of all the pride of life, the end of flesh as fallen. Who among men love it, to show it forth? But this death is the Lord's death—death of the Prince of life! Yes, He was once here, and man put Him to death; and He will come again to judge the quick and the dead. But our thoughts flow upon another line than this. They begin with God and the Father, who has enabled us to feed upon death, to find our aliment in it, to take it and bear it about in us continually. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His way our ways. Man rebelled, and God pointed His Son to the ruin, as the occasion in which He could glorify God and the Father. He came from the Father, the gift of God, to lay His life down. Never did the marvels of His person as Son of God and Son of man shine forth in their glories more preciously. As Son of God, He would give effect to His Father's counsels, carry out His Father's plans, though death and hell withstood Him. As Son of man, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and could show His integrity—obedient unto death, the death of the cross, and His fitness to be a ransom. What a combination of marvels came out in that death. Through His death He was to nullify him that had the power of death, that is, the devil—His death led on to by Satan, in whose hour it was accomplished by man. He left the grave and the unseen world, as Goliath was left when Samson had been a prisoner, and took the gates and cross-bar upon his shoulder and carried them off. So He led captivity captive, and rifled the grave of its prey, and left it rent. His death proved, and showed out the principle of all man's actings here below; and the perfection of His human nature showed out the thorough evil in the human nature of all others. Crucified through weakness, He was obedient unto death, bearing the judgment (as the just One) of the many unjust. Man as such cannot feed on death, much less on the death of the Lord, the Prince of life. A saint can. We have, for we have found in His death our life. The Rock smitten gave forth living water. We have found in His death that in which we can have fellowship with God about sin. We judge that He alone could bear its penalty; we judge that He has borne it. We feed upon it, thinking with delight of how it is our Red Sea between us and Egypt, the world around us; how it is God's judgment passed upon all that we were. The table is the only place that rallies God's children here below; and here each time we come we feed on death. But then this is not confined to the table; it is our principle of life here below (2 Cor. 4:10), and of God's actings towards us. (vv. 4-11.) Are you in your daily practice thus feeding upon death, making His death your food? Shut in by His death as Israel, by the Red Sea on one side—the prospect on the other is, "until He come!"

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