Revelation - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 11:19 and 12, Notes on

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

CHAPTERS 11: 19; and 12

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

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

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

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

Chapter 12 is divided into three parts; the first, beginning with verse 1 down to verse 6; the second, from verse 7 down to verse 12; the third, from verse 13 down to verse 17. First part. Verses 1-6 place before us the actors in this scene, viz., a woman with child of Him who is the object of all the counsels of God, and the vessel of His power on earth, while herself weak (she is, according to His counsels, clothed with supreme glory); a child mighty, but who does not yet act in His might, but is hidden and withdrawn into heaven, while the woman flees into the wilderness; a great red dragon, Satan, who would devour the child, and who hates the woman and persecutes her. The woman is clothed with the sun, with the glory of God, with all supreme authority. The moon is under her feet; all subordinate and derivative authority is under her feet. She has upon her head a crown of twelve stars-power in man displayed to perfection.

The second sign in heaven is a child, the heir of strength. The woman is not the church. There is a great red dragon who is against the woman; it is Satan who resists the manifestation of the glory of the child and of the woman. His power is perfect in its kind; he has seven heads, with crowns, and ten horns. The tail is designative of the bad influence of error in doctrine. The dragon draws after him the third part of the stars of heaven, the authorities. Satan would devour the child. The child is Christ; it is also the church, as associated with Christ. Like Christ she is to govern the nations; Psa. 2 and Rev. 2:26, 27. The church receives this power from her being associated with Christ; she will, notwithstanding, be also active in heaven. When the Lord Jesus comes again, it will be in the display of His authority, for He shall rule all nations with a rod of iron, and the church will be with Him; Psa. 2:6-9; Rev. 2:27. It is what Christ will do when He has taken possession of the inheritance of the nations. Now, He looks for the church; John 17:9. Later, He will look for the world; Psa. 2:7. He makes the church to be partaker with Him in the possession of the world; Rev. 2:27.

The male child then is Christ, the Head of the church which is His body. The Man complete is Christ and the church. Christ imparts to the church all He has; but the power of Christ is not yet displayed. Christ and the church are hidden in God. The woman, on the contrary, who was clothed with the sun, remains on the earth, and is in the desert. As soon as we are obliged to seek the woman on earth, it can be none else but the Jews. The church is only in heavenly places, she is not known on earth. Jerusalem is the center where God recognizes His people. It is the people of God, in relation with God, which becomes the woman on earth when the male child is in heaven. If we seek for the instruments on earth, we shall find that Christ was born of the Jews. In Zion it shall be said " This man was born there," Psa. 87 We have the thought of God in the woman and the glory. We have, besides, the result of this thought, which is Christ. It is to the woman that Satan bears an ill-will; he hates her; but he cannot touch the child who is in heaven.

Second part, verses 7-12. We are told here the circumstances which force the woman to flee. Satan and his angels are in heaven; Eph. 6:12. Satan has access to the heavens which God created, where His throne is placed. It is there he was the accuser of Job; but Satan has no entrance into the light, which cannot be approached. Jesus says, speaking of the miracles of His disciples, " I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven." From a feeble sample of the power of His name He sees all the power of Satan cast out from heaven. A war takes place now in heaven. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels. Michael is called the archangel in Jude 9. The word of God speaks of only one archangel. The immediate result of this war is that Satan is cast out from heaven into the earth. He has no more power in heaven. It is a great mistake to believe that Satan is in the lake of fire. He is with the angels in heavenly places. Men will be found in the lake of fire burning with brimstone before Satan is there; chap. 19:20. He shall be cast out of heaven into the earth, where he will still act and deceive the nations. He is already worshipped amongst the pagans. As soon as the event here anticipatively announced by prophecy takes place, the heavens are forever cleansed from the defilement and presence of Satan. He was overcome by those on earth, as accuser, by the blood of the Lamb. Satan's accusations only draw out the manifestation of God's favor towards His children. Cast out from heaven, Satan shall come again

on the earth to gather the nations from the four quarters of the earth to battle, and to make war against heaven.

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

Two wings of a great eagle are given to the woman. The strong man of God, Christ, does not yet exercise His power. The woman has nothing else to do but to flee for three years and a half, during which time Satan exercises his power on earth with great fury. The only resource of the woman is to flee. Jesus foretold this in Matt. 24:16. As soon as the abomination that makes desolate shall stand in the holy place (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 11), three years and a half will elapse until the deliverance. At the beginning of these three years and a half the disciples are to flee to the mountains; Matt. 24:16. The woman fled to the desert. It is the last end of the -indignation (Dan. 8:19) and of the vengeance; Isa. 34:8; ch. 60: 2; Jer. 50:15, 28; ch. 51: 6, 22, etc.

One cannot apply to the Roman eagles what is said of the abomination of desolation. Nothing, from the time Jerusalem was taken by Titus, coincides with the twelve hundred and ninety days in Dan. 12:11, even calculating, as some would do, twelve hundred and ninety years instead of twelve hundred and ninety days.

The serpent does all he can to kill the woman, even when she flees. There remaineth (v. 17) a remnant of the seed of the woman, with whom Satan shall make war. Those who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, are those who have the Spirit of prophecy, who are attached to Jesus (that is to say, to the testimony of the Spirit of prophecy, which is God's testimony to God's promise, and not to Antichrist). The flood which the dragon casts out of his mouth is a mass of people; Isa. 8:7, 8. When the king of Assyria and all his glory come to lay waste through Judea, they are presented under the image of a flood and of waters strong and many. The earth swallows the flood which the dragon casts out after the woman. God, in His providence, prevents these nations from devouring and destroying Israel.

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

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal 9, Book of Life

IN a general way we have God's book as a registry. But then you have specifically, in the New Testament, book of life. In one case it is said, Whose names are not written in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world. These God had written, and it was sure. But they are supposed true, unless shown to be otherwise-as one on the list of voters, unless proved to have no right.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 17, Fragment on

" Judgment " (v. 1) does not merely mean the execution of punishment, but the sentence pronounced or accusation. There are here things with which Babylon is charged: it is said of Christ that Pilate put up His " accusation "1-the thing for which He was sentenced. Babylon here has the character of the church, and yet it is the most wicked system in the world. John, having part in the poor despised church, was banished to the isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus; and yet he saw that which was called " the church " governing this Roman empire which had put him in prison, a constituted system controlling peoples, etc. No wonder that he marveled (v. 6): it must have been astonishing to him. The expression means, he wondered with a great wonder, somewhat as we should say, dying the death. " They that dwell on the earth shall wonder "-in their moral character, dwellers upon earth: it is general. The place to be looked to as the scene of it is the Roman empire.

The special character of the whore is seductive influence of the masses, and alliance with the leading powers. The kings commit fornication with her, and the masses are made thoroughly stupefied-drunk with new wine-not like those who were accused of being so in Acts, but in truth filled with the Spirit. In their sober senses they would have seen the corruption, but they are made drunk. It can only be understood in " the wilderness " (v. 3), where it is seen there is not one green blade for the soul. Upon her forehead was a name written, " Mystery," etc. If a person is drunk, you may write on his forehead anything, things that were never heard of. She would not have taken such names as Mother of Harlots, etc., if her eyes had been open. The character of it is very plain, except to the besotted mind. John was in the Spirit led into the wilderness, and therefore he could understand it. A " MYSTERY " can only be discerned by revelation and the power of God. It is simple to him who understands, but " great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh," etc., is a riddle to those who have no spiritual understanding.

This false thing which has the name of " mystery," to those who are used to it, is as rotten as possible. The priest, with all his mummery, genuflexions, etc., can laugh at it; but the simple man who is ensnared by it thinks it all piety, and he is deluded by it. Absolution is thought to be a very wonderful thing-it quiets his conscience, and then he begins sinning again. Men call it a mystery, and so it may be, because it is the devil's work. There is only one thing to keep a man out of popery, and that is the knowledge of divine righteousness. If one has got that, he will never want to try putting a cross on the ground, and then licking the dust. Divine righteousness can never be made a whit better by any works of self-crucifixion, mortification, etc., and therefore the man who knows he has this will not be trying works of his own to add to it.

Popery not only wants to add works, but it wants a priesthood. In Christendom, wherever there is a pretension to priesthood there is the devil. There is something that separates between me and God: there may be ever so little a germ of it, but still it is there. Priesthood in any shape is

a denial of Christianity, though there may be a great deal that modifies the case. It brings a veil between me and God, as though Christ had not accomplished the work. Priesthood and clericalism, as set up by man, are both against God and the priesthood of Christ, interfering with the work of redemption as though this wanted something to be added to it. A man-organized ministry or clergy, denies liberty to God's love; and virtually says, If you do not let me cut the channel, the gospel shall not go forth. I believe in ministry, but that is the very reason I will not admit clericalism; just for the same reason that, if I support royalty, I shall not admit a usurper. If I am not spiritual enough to get to God myself, I naturally enough get someone else to go for me; that is why priesthood and the clergy are set up. Popery is denying not so much truth as the application of truth. They allow there is efficacy in Christ's blood-shedding, but how am I to get it? is the question. Oh! said Luther, get it by faith. Here is the application of it.

There is another thing that characterizes Babylon-idolatry; like Balaam, who set a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, etc. When priesthood comes in, there is always more or less of idolatry also. If I know how to come to God, I do not want a priest any more than an idol; but if not, I want both. " Abominations " (v. 4, 5) simply means idols. The word ' abomination ' constantly occurs in the Old Testament, meaning an idol. It is connected with all that is degraded; and the moment man gives up belief in the true God, he is sure to degrade himself. If man does not look to something above himself, he will sink to that which is below him, as we see in Rom. 1 The attributes of God Himself were made to be symbolized in the cherubim which the Ninevites, etc., used to worship. They stopped short at the symbol, instead of going beyond to Him who was symbolized, and this was idolatry. In Israel they made pillars of God's throne. What men had formerly about the Creator, they have now about the Intercessor. The truth of God is thrown into a channel that suits nature, but it is opposed to the Holy Ghost.

Then the next thing is murder. Satan is a liar, and the "father of lies"; and he is also a "murderer from the beginning." So, in the working of Satan, we find there is first idolatry, and then it leads to murder. The "woman is drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." This is the time of prosperity to her. She is drunken. There are two characteristics given of those with whose blood she is drunken. It is not said any Christians; but they who "will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." "I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them." The terms, saints and martyrs of Jesus, witnesses for Him, are given to characterize them. They are not characterized as those who are settling down here upon earth.

" The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her " (v. 2). This, in a hidden way, we may find going on now. The departure of the pope from Rome was the beginning of it. The kings of the earth are allying with the pope, in order to keep down radicalism, which is an enemy to them. The woman sits upon a scarlet-colored beast (v. 3), and the beast must carry her, but she governs the beast.

" The beast that was, and is not," etc. (v. 8), means the Roman empire-an expression that is intended to characterize it, not date. It " shall be present "; that is, it is the resurrection of the Roman empire in a devilish way-the perfection of power in a diabolical energy. There are seven heads and ten horns-neither spiritual nor human perfection.

Verse 14. " They that are with him are called and faithful, and chosen." This is the bride individualized When Christ is spoken of as Bridegroom, she is spoken of as bride, and that is in the Father's house; but when the throne or the Lamb is spoken of, they are individualized who are connected with them.

Verse 15. " The waters which thou sawest " are not only dwellers on the Roman earth here, but China and all over the world. Wherever Christ goes, she, the mother of abominations, thinks she has a right to go. Kings mean kings as such; horns mean kingdoms-the whole power, such as France, where there may he no king reigning.

The beast was the vessel of Satan's power against the vessel of God's power-Christ. There is the holiness of the one city- the heavenly Jerusalem; and the scenes of corruption God judges in the other: and it is well to notice that what is after the flesh is always successful at the first, in order to put the faithful to the test. " That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Cain and his doings are first narrated, before we hear of the true seed; Ishmael, the apparent heir, was long before the birth of Isaac; Esau remained in the promised land, while Jacob was a fugitive; Saul was king before David, and, to all appearance, Saul possessed the title to God's power for a long time, while David did not resist him. We may see it in Jesus Himself, when He said, " I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught "; while others said, " Aha! aha! so would we have it." Yes, and Jesus said to His disciples, " Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." It is God's way, in His rule of government, to allow it to go on for a time. He will put to the test whether the heart will go through the trial of being put down, but when God takes His power He will have it otherwise; until then, the Lord says, " I waited patiently " (Psa. 40): take no rescue till He comes. When did Jesus ever save Himself from all that came upon Him?

The whore sits upon " many waters." The wicked may have children at their desire, and have substance; but the saint says, When God fills all things, I shall then be satisfied, and I shall awake up in His likeness. We have a description of Babylon before the heavenly Jerusalem-the whore in chapters 17 and 18, and the bride in chapter 21.

There is imperial glory in Babylon also-all that could attract-purple, scarlet, and precious stones; but John saw by the Spirit the true character of it all-the beauty which attracts man but disgusts God, and He will never be mocked. He will have us walk by faith, and though He shows us the woman riding the beast, and the beast carrying the woman, He holds the bridle till the church is gathered. " Babylon the great "! This is the character of it, and in this way it is the world, it is the source and spring of all the idolatry, the rival of the Jerusalem of God; and she is not the only one, but the mother of all, and in her was found the blood of saints and martyrs. As Babylon she had corrupted all the nations, and here she is drunken with blood. You always find the great opponent of truth is the corrupter. See it in the chief priests, who gave up Christ; they were more guilty than the soldiers. After paganism we have corruption from what bore the name of Christianity; and not only so, but oppression; in her the blood is found-that which called itself the holy city!

In verse 8 the beast was, and is not. The Roman empire ascends, for there is a connection between the two-the seven heads and ten horns. The Roman empire was, and is not, but comes back again, and comes under the influence of Satan, for it ascends " out of the bottomless pit." Christ came out from God's throne, and the beast out of the depths of the pit-an antagonistic power; one out of the light, the other out of darkness, and they wonder who are not guarded by God's electing grace. The shadows are coming over the renewed Roman earth, the principles are at work. But verse 9 is a distinct character, the woman is on the seven hills, not on the beast-Rome, and marked to show not merely a beast, but Babylonish power: the whole power so concentrated in the last head, that it becomes the beast. Christ wields the power of heavenly things, and in the same way (v. 12) for a season, no kingdom yet. But the ten horns receive power for one hour with the beast: they are contemporaneous-did not supplant the beast, but received power with him. We have seen, in a sense, they have power with the woman,

but here it is a person in whom the power is concentrated, but I get in the ten horns the federacy, associated with the beast, they give " their power and strength," " their kingdom " unto the beast. Western Europe will present it, they will have one kind of general unity, not individuality of the nations but unity, and they cannot go on without a head; so they are content to give power to the beast, and they say, " Who is like to the beast? " And they make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb overcomes them and we have the church with Him. Angels are not called to this; they are upheld by grace, but not " called " (v. 14).

In verse 16 the ten horns hate the whore, for, after all, the woman will be in the way; they will not bear to be priest-ridden, and they will destroy her. All that is ripening up will be destroyed by the people in an ignominious way; for though this corruption is trying to keep down the people, it will not succeed

This is the latter-day scene, and, in closing, I would say, it is a solemn scene; but what can we expect from sinful man? and, I must say again, there is no corruption so terrible as the corruption of the mediation of Christ. The heart that is brought to Him is astonished to see how people are attracted by the external, which has not one trace of Christ in it. But the soul that is brought to God has got divine righteousness, and if one comes to me to offer pardon of my sins, I say, I have got it. And if I receive from you, I must get it again and again; but through Christ's blood my sin is remembered no more. The thing offered is not Christianity, for the Christian has got his place; and it has got Babylon on its forehead, and if you cannot see, you have not got a spiritual eye. The Lord help us, for all are in danger who are not on simple ground. I have no thought that man's wisdom will do anything; but He will keep the feet of His saints. If the woman is destroyed, the horns give power to the beast: if corruption ceases, these make war with the Lamb, but the soul that is brought into peace, and holding the Head, shall be hid secretly; near to Jesus is a hiding-place, and there we shall be spared from all that is around. The Lord keep us from the spirit of the world, and guard us from the corruption of the mediatorial work of Christ!

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 19:1-9, Notes on

CHAPTER 19:1-9

Glory belongs to God and to the Lamb. If the church is looking for its advantages on the earth, it falls into Babylon. Jesus wills that she should have the glory that belongs to Him, and that she should with Him wait until He enters into His glory to enjoy it with Him. If she is looking for an earthly glory, she becomes unfaithful to her heavenly Bridegroom; and this is the greatest unfaithfulness. We ought not to have any of the things which the price of this world gives, but receive the heavenly things from the hand of God, and expect them from Himself. The church ought to be on the earth the manifestation of that thorough detachment from the earth.

She ought to be entirely independent of everything else, and in absolute dependence on God. This is the trial and proof of faith—to refuse the possession of things before God gives them. It was the sin of Saul to have sacrificed before Samuel had come. It is infinitely better to wait for the enjoyment of everything with Christ. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:22-23). And if this link is broken, the relationship between God and the creature is broken also. The church must wait for the epoch of her glory, until the judgment of God be executed. Satan always tries to deceive the church in this respect. He even endeavors to unite Christians in a spirit of human association to arrive at a spiritual millennium which is not promised, and which would exalt man and the means he has in his hand. Nothing will make the bride happy but the presence of the Bridegroom. On the other hand, God will not exercise His power in the government of the world without Christ. Those who endeavor to produce a spiritual millennium want to use the resources of men. And as they must have money, they rest on what man can give. It is a Babel, notwithstanding the excellence of the intentions; and Christians who expect the blessing before the judgment always rest on the energy of man.

Rev. 19:3-4. The church praises the Lord because of the judgment of Babylon. The Lamb is not yet manifested. God judges corruption. The Lamb judges the beast, because it rises up against the King of kings.

Rev. 19:5-6. God begins to take possession of His kingdom. When God acts as king, He executes judgment. If He were now acting as a king, every soul here would be cut off; but now He is acting in patience and in grace during the priesthood of Jesus.

Rev. 19:7 is the expression of our joy. It is impossible that Christ can take possession of His kingdom before the church has made herself ready, and is manifested in the glory, and, that having been through resurrection, introduced into the glory for the marriage of the Lamb. Jesus will have us united to Him in the glory. When Christ shall manifest His glory, He wills that the world which has despised us should know that we are loved even as Christ Himself was loved. The marriage of the Lamb will be to us the manifestation of that love. Babylon being judged, the Lord celebrates the marriage-supper of the Lamb. We see the contrast between Babylon, the glory of the world, and the church of God, which has suffered with Christ, which has been persecuted in the world, but which is now glorified with Jesus. We see here the entirely heavenly character of the church.

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

Is it anything extraordinary that the Holy Spirit should attach us to heaven, and detach us from the earth? Jesus had the taste of heaven in everything He did, and the world cannot bear this. Whatever binds the church to the world loosens her from Christ. Jesus cannot recognize anything in the world, for there is nothing in the world that has not, according to its power, contributed to reject Him. It is impossible for a wife to attach herself to two husbands. It is not only forbidden, but it is quite impossible. As a bride, the church belongs to Christ; and we are dead

to everything except to Christ risen. Christ for the church can only be a heavenly Bridegroom. As a temporal and Jewish Saviour of Israel, Jesus forbids His disciples to go into the way of the Gentiles; He was a Jew and He could only acknowledge those that were Jews: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). The church, in order to have a Christ, must have a risen Christ. The world having rejected Christ, Christ owns no fellowship with the world. The cross has put an everlasting barrier between the world, as such, and Jesus. "The world seeth me no more" (John 14:19), except as a Judge. Jesus saves a soul in separating it from the world, and communicates to that soul a life capable of enjoying the world to come where Jesus is glorified and loved.

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

To apply the Psalms to the present time, when they say, "The Lord reigneth," is to produce confusion. These Psalms express righteous judgment, and the desire to wash one's feet in the blood of the enemies. What connection is there in this with the spirit of the Christian? This relates to a dispensation of judgment and of righteousness, and not of grace. Grace is acting now to draw the heart, and to make it cleave to heavenly things. In the reign of Christ God will reign in righteousness; and the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms calls for justice in the time of His reign. The principles of the relations of God with men are quite different. The reign of Christ will be for the earth a time of joy; but that joy will proceed from the presence of righteousness acting upon the earth; Psa. 96; 97; 98; 99 When Jehovah takes to Him His power and reigns, He will execute justice and judgment in the earth. Do you believe that if He were actually exercising judgment, things would go on in the earth as they do now? The Lord is acting in grace now, and when He executes justice, the wicked will be cut off, and the righteous will then be able to live in peace, for he will be sustained and filled with joy. When Christians have chosen to sing the Psalms as belonging to the church, the relationship of Jehovah with Israel and those of the Father with the church have been confounded, and the church is thrown into darkness and worldliness. When all this is confounded, Jehovah is not found just, and the Father does not sanctify His people. In the Revelation we do not find the relationship of the Father with the church. So long as the church is on earth, God has not assumed the power of His kingdom.

In Revelation 19:7 the primary object of the love of God is to unite the church to Christ. This must take place in order that Christ may appear in glory and judge the beast. The church is not yet the wife—she is only betrothed to Christ. The Holy Spirit can never produce the glory of the church, nor celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb, because He cannot be the Bridegroom of the church. And to wish for the joy of the millennium through the Holy Spirit only, is to wish for the joy of the bride without the Bridegroom, which is a folly. There must be the personal manifestation of Jesus. The church must be risen to be with her risen Spouse.

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

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

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 19:11-21, Notes on

CHAPTER 19:11-21

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

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

To philosophy God is only a means man uses to extol himself; but God has been pleased to bring low the wisdom and the intelligence of man by saving, through the foolishness of preaching, all those who believe. There where the Son of man has been humbled He shall be glorified; and man must bow the knee before the Last Adam. God will have the Lord Jesus as the Lord of glory; and He will be glorified in Jesus, in rendering men submissive to Jesus as Lord. Jesus must be recognized such as God has presented Him, according to the foolishness of preaching, or one must recognize Him, without hope of mercy, when His glory shall be manifested. If one will not have a Savior, one must have a Judge. There is no one that will not have to bow the knee to Jesus. If one does not do it now, it is ingratitude and baseness.

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

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

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

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

The last beast, the Roman empire revived, comes up out of the bottomless pit and goes to perdition. This is what we have brought before us. Men's passions will be inspired and excited by Satan, " whose coming," we read, " is after the working of Satan," 2 Thess. 2:9. Judas is an example of this. We do not only see in him covetousness, and the temptation of Satan presented to covetousness; but Satan taking possession of the heart, and hardening all the natural affections of a disciple towards Jesus. At that time also Satan shall harden the hearts of those of whom he shall have taken possession, even against the manifestation of all the glory of Jesus. Some natural feelings are found remaining, until Satan has taken possession of the heart; but after this man is capable of doing anything. Thus the chief priests would have killed Lazarus (John 12: to), because Jesus had raised him to life again, and because of this many of the Jews believed in Jesus, and left them; and they determined to put Jesus to death, because He had raised Lazarus from the dead; John 11:47-57.

The man of the earth lifts his head even up to heaven. Like Adam, he wishes to be as God Himself: he wishes to be so under the character of Christ, and he is Antichrist. He wants to possess the earth and make war with heaven; Isa. 14:13, 14. Endowed with all the power of Satan, all man's faculties in exercise, inspired by Satan's energy, he assumes authority over all, and would seat himself at Jerusalem as king of all the earth, and extol himself like unto the Most High. It is then that the Son of man, who has humbled Himself, and whom God has exalted, shall come down from heaven, and the man of the earth who has exalted himself shall he abased. The question is now, and this is all the question, Whether the man of the earth is to prevail over the Man of heaven. The last beast, having seized upon the earth, and being followed by the kings of the earth, makes war with Christ. We must know whether God will be the stronger, not only in the conscience, but in the world and in glory. Jerusalem is already becoming the center of man's thoughts in the earth, because it is there the nations are to be gathered for judgment; Zech. 12:1-3. The nations appear to be beginning to burden themselves with Jerusalem. They do so without acknowledging the rights of Christ, who is alone the true King of Jerusalem; but God shall make good the claims of Christ. The nations are laboring in the fire for very vanity (Isa. 50:11), in order that He that has been despised may be glorified.

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

Verse 15 is in allusion to Psa. 2:8, 9: " Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This is what Jesus shall execute at His glorious appearing. To break the nations with a rod of iron is quite another thing from the gospel. He has the nations, not as His bride, but as His inheritance. The little stone (Dan. 2:34, 35) becomes a great mountain, filling the whole earth. The church (Rev. 2:26, 27) is made a partaker with Him in His power over the nations. Jesus has received power of His Father, not merely to secure the church, but also to break the nations, and the church shall be with Jesus. Jesus has not yet asked for the inheritance; but is praying that His own may be kept. He is the sovereign High Priest, not of the world, but of the church. We have a High Priest; Heb. 4:14, 15; chap. 8: 1. The rebellious Jews shall be judged. The judgment of the world is by Jesus-such is the use of the rod of iron which He wields.

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

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

It is after this that the judgment of the beast will take place. This beast is the wicked one announced to the Thessalonians, the Antichrist of Daniel. The false prophet is here found identified with the second beast. The distinction between the church glorified and the world judged is very evident in the chapter before us. Antichrist extols himself, and Christ comes only to judge him. The things which God will separate in judgment are already separated in His mind, and they are as much so now as when they will be seen, the one in the lake of fire, and the other in heaven. The judgment shall merely manifest this to the world. There are three characters of the beast and of Satan's power.

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

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

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

In the Revelation and in Daniel there are ten kingdoms. The beast has a mortal wound, but comes out of the bottomless pit. The ten kings give their power to it, and the dragon his throne; but it goes into perdition. The kings associate themselves with it, and this satanical power, which at all times has overcome the saints, and which has been set up again, goes to perdition. It is the apostasy and antagonism of power against God. The eighth head is the beast. All its power is concentrated in the head, in the chief of the Roman empire. This is not yet manifested. Antichrist, who is the chief of the iniquity of the human heart, fills up the measure of the rebellion of the Gentiles, to whom God had entrusted power when He removed His throne from Jerusalem, at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Instead of glorifying God in His kingdom, man rejects Jesus, and in the end is found making war against Jesus.

2 Thess. 2:1-12. In verse 3 Antichrist is the son of perdition. He goes to perdition. Antichrist, the wicked one, has brought the iniquity of man to its height. To have sinned against God, violated the law, and rejected Jesus, although nothing morally was wanting to the sin of man-all this was not yet the height of iniquity. The mystery of iniquity is that evil which acts in a hidden manner in the bosom of the church, as a germ destined to grow until the revolt-a revolt which will pursue its course till it rises up openly against Christ manifested in glory. While men were slumbering, the enemy has sown the tares. The mystery of iniquity, which had already begun at the time of the apostle, ends in the revolt of Christianity, the professing church. God does not judge what is only yet in a state of mystery. The mystery is that which is known only by its revelation, and without this it remains hidden to all human intelligence. It is the same also with the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, and with the mystery of the union of Christ and the church. What a mystery of iniquity it is, that the church should have been made the nest where Satan has begun and brought forth the fullness of the iniquity of man! Jude wished to write of the salvation common to them, but he could not. The evil had begun, and he urges them to contend earnestly for what they had. The evil had begun. He warns them, " for certain men have crept in among you unawares, who have turned the grace of God into lasciviousness," and who end in denying the Lord Jesus. Those were the same of whom Enoch had prophesied. It is to deny the Savior recognized according to the testimony given by the Holy Ghost, and to revolt against Him: this will be the fullness of iniquity; after that comes the judgment.

To the Thessalonians Paul explains the progress of the mystery of iniquity, until that which is now an obstacle to it be taken away. When this is taken out of the way, then shall the wicked by revealed. He is the representative of the iniquity, and he will be manifested when that which restrains iniquity shall be taken away. His character is to be without law, to do his own will, man's will. The word rendered by " the wicked one " signifies " he that is without law." Christ, the Man of God, says, " Lo, I come, O God, to do thy will," Psa. 40:7, 8; Heb. to. He has been a servant in everything. He gives the kingdom to those for whom the Father has prepared it. His only will was to do the will of God. " Not my will, but thy will." " By the obedience of one many are made righteous," Rom. 5:19. He has not in anything done His own will.

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

God permits Satan to act with efficacy. They would do their own will. They will work signs, wonders, and miracles of falsehood. The wicked one will be the expression of the iniquity of man without restraint, who will have no law. He will put himself under the influence and bondage of Satan, who will give him all his power. It is in its full power the principle of the first Adam, but with a decided will, knowing it and wishing it, and acting after the thoughts and according to the power which Satan inspires him with. The question is, Who is to succeed, the Man of God,

or the man of the earth who will do his own will?

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

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

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 1:5-6, Fragment on

THE ways in which the gospel may be preached and reach the heart are so many, that one has to look to the Lord to direct one, that it may be brought so as to comfort the saint and awaken the sinner. The moment the word is revealed to the soul in grace, the point is gained. There may be a thousand thoughts on men's minds, but there is enough in this blessed word to meet these thoughts, and to bring every one of them into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He is the Lord of all; and in His Person all truth centers. He is the substance of all truth-the ground and center of truth to the soul. As we know Him, we get comfort, peace, and joy; as we walk with Him we have power to overcome. In verse 5 we have Christ presented in a threefold character. He is the one most drawn out by the Spirit of God. Alas! it is not always so drawn out in our heart. The answering character to that in the spirit of grace is, " To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." In verse 7 is an application to the world-it will be a day of mourning to them. The Jews behold Him whom they have pierced, and the nations wail because of Him.

Let us especially consider the way in which Christ is presented to the soul. First, we have grace and peace in a peculiar form from God, that is, Jehovah; and the seven spirits, His spiritual perfectness, not the Father speaking to His children, but the Eternal, and the seven spirits, the Holy Ghost exercising the varied power of the throne. Christ is brought near as connected with the earth; the faithful Witness when He was here below. This is what our souls need to remember-faithful testimony to what God is; for without this we have no certainty, whether as saints or sinners. A holy man cannot know God without the witness, nor whether the witness would suffice to meet a holy God. When I know God, I get sure ground to go upon, I shall know where I am-a terrible thing if I am walking in sin; but there is only uncertainty out of Christ, for He is the light.

There are sufficient traces of power in creation to serve as a witness of the eternal power and Godhead-enough of misery around us to see ruin-enough in conscience to learn that we have sinned; but we cannot learn God in providence, for we know not why He does this, or refrains from doing that. Providence is a depth out of our reach; we are not able to find out and judge the ways of God, nor indeed of the thoughts of a man's mind very often. There is another, the law, which appears to be a clear witness for God against sin. It is true that this is a witness of God's claim on man. We ought to love God with all our hearts, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, but it reveals nothing of God's thoughts to us, and if this were the only witness, we should be ruined forever. The object of the law is not love, but righteousness God's everlasting claim of righteousness. But the law cannot meet what we want, for it says, " Thou shalt not covet," and there was never a man since the days of Adam that did not covet. If you do not satisfy God's claims, there is a curse upon you. Thus the law is man's letter of death. We turn to Christ, the faithful Witness, " the same yesterday, to-day and forever "the Witness down here amid the same circumstances in which we are placed, and dealing with men in all the feelings of life.

Jesus Christ was not as a king shut up in His palace, but in the midst of all man's wants, passions, propensities, and desires. The first grand comfort is when I see Christ, the faithful Witness, in the same circumstances as I am in: our hearts can say what God is to us. When I look at Christ down here, I see the faithful Witness, and I am brought into certain ground as to what I should meet in God. Jesus did not come claiming from man what he ought to be, but showing out Himself in all the circumstances of man-showing us what God is.

Whatever character I meet, Christ is the faithful Witness- the life and the light of man. This faithful Witness owns no goodness but in God. When the young man came to Him, Jesus does not tell him that He Himself is God, for that was not the time to do this. The young man was very lovely, and he thought by adding something to what he had already done he should go to heaven. He came to seek teaching of Jesus, and he gets Him as the end of the law. The faithful Witness touched him. All was laid bare, and the young man's heart was found given to mammon. With the Pharisees the faithful Witness showed that their righteousness was only adding the sin of hypocrisy, as all outward show is. He knocked down men's righteousness with a terrible hand. What was the company that Christ came to? He was the friend of publicans and sinners. This upset the whole standard of man's righteousness. How came this? Because all pretenses to righteousness were found to be false. This is a terrible thing for those who are building their hopes of heaven on their character. The world is constantly presenting their character at the expense of their conscience.

On the other hand, we see that Jesus did not want a character from man, but from God. John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness, and he went into the desert, and was company for no man. He came in the way of righteousness, not in grace. It is commonly said, a man is known by the company he keeps; and this is true, in a certain sense, of Jesus. How? He who in His own nature was holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners, was the companion of publicans and sinners, the faithful Witness to them of grace, that God is love. Jesus would make no allowance for man's claim to righteousness. He had compassion for sinners-He was always grace.

Whatever your state, come to Jesus, and you will find that He is always gracious, that He has always grace. The disciples would send some away when they brought young children to Jesus. They thought Him a great doctor, and that He must not be approached. Jesus took them up in His arms, and blessed them. The disciples had no sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of Jesus; yet He spoke to them as if they had sustained Him. " Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptation." " They all forsook him, and fled " (Matt. 28:5, 6), Peter even denying that he knew Him.

If I find difficulty in the way of the sheep, Jesus goes before them. In everything He had gone before us. Do I fear death? Jesus set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, knowing that He should there be crucified. In this faithful Witness we find the activity of love. He came to seek and to save those that were lost, to bring them to Himself. The moment I find Christ I find a true God and Savior. I may have been walking in all sin, but when I find Christ, I find One who was such to such as I am-to sinners. If I take God's witness of Himself, and give up reasoning, I know what God actually is- He is seeking sinners-and have no uncertainty at all. I may think I may get better, and may put off coming to God; the God who has come down first in Christ, or I should never repent at all. God, who so rich in mercy to come down into all my loneliness, He has come down as the faithful Witness to take up such as me-He could be the Friend of publicans and sinners: He was despised for it- faithful in love going through all the scene of man, because He was the faithful Witness, that grace may come to me where I am ashamed to be seen of men: there Christ comes to seek me out, determined to be the faithful Witness of God, who is rich in mercy. It is not that God has given a good character of Himself up in heaven; but it is goodness come down to earth, to identify Himself with all the misery of man. The One above all, our Savior, is God, and God is love, and Christ came to be a faithful Witness of this. You cannot be in any condition that Christ did not come into. He plunged into the very sea of men's misery to help you out. It is a comfort to get man's sympathy, but he often cannot help us. What is it to get God's sympathy, which has power in it? This was the accepted time, from the time of Jesus, coming into the world, to His coming again-the day of grace.

What a comfort to the saint to meet the faithful Witness, who never reproached the disciples' negligence, but said in the tenderest manner, " Could ye not watch with me one hour? " He waits upon all our circumstances-upon all our anxieties. As our High Priest He bears us always on His breast-the accomplishment of God's love to saints, as well as to sinners.

The conscience makes even a saint afraid of God; he finds an evil will in himself, and the devil often gets an advantage over a sincere saint, and keeps him away from God; but the comfort is, Christ met the enemy in all his power, and He is presented to me as the First-begotten from the dead, the One who has put Himself under all the consequences of my sin, and now in His new character I find Him " the faithful Witness "—One who has borne all my sins-not now under them. The Father in righteousness was obliged to raise Him from the dead, and I can say, as a believer in Him, that I have no guilt-He sees all washed away. This is beholding Christ as the First-begotten from the dead. I see One who has blotted out my sins before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and I get true and settled peace-not a cold, hardhearted way of saying I have peace; but I look to Jesus as my Savior, and this re-kindles love, and impels me to keep His commandments.

We are by nature under Satan's power the end of which is death; but the Lord Jesus overcame through death him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and through this I have not only victory over Satan in Christ, but I may say all things are mine, whether life or death, etc. Satan could not deal with the heirs of salvation, unless he had foiled the Captain, and Jesus submitted Himself to the power of Satan, but in the resurrection that power was broken forever. Liberty and joy are ours; not freedom from conflict, but deliverance from Satan. Now the way that Satan gets power over us is by his wiles, persuading us to receive him as a friend, instead of treating him as a fiend-" Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you." It is not said, Overcome him, for this Jesus did before.

Jesus was the expression of grace and truth, the blessed Son of God before; but now in resurrection, He presents us with a new character to God, such as man never had before-a Man who had put Himself under the power of death, risen to absolute dominion: a new thing-man once without God, now in the very presence of God, and the very pattern of God's mind and delight! Sin is done with in Christ, and our standing in Him is quite a new thing-" Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh." There is no past history of this, no experience, not any old thing; all is done away, there is an entirely new Headship in the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Is this my place? Yes; but we find difficulty in apprehending this, because of the weakness of the flesh; for the moment I look at myself, I have another man full of failure; but my standing before God is in Christ the new Man, not in myself that I have to struggle against, but the new Man, the Lord Jesus Himself I am one with, who bore my sins and put them away forever. " Beloved, now are we the sons of God," etc. (1 John 3:2), but it is not by being in glory that I shall be justified, that is by faith now. Justification is from two causes; first, that Christ bore my sins; secondly, that He is before God without sin.

" Prince of the kings of the earth." I would say a few words on this point, together with the response from the heart of the saints. We see not here the dominion of Christ over the kings of the earth, but we shall shortly. As to the response of the church: when God enables me to believe the testimony of the Son, He gives me the Holy Ghost, He puts the Spirit into man's heart as a seal, and earnest of glory. What is the effect in this verse 5? It gives power to say us-" To him that loveth us," no uncertainty: the Holy Ghost always says to us, not them (1 Peter 2:21), not that we shall be loved, but He does love us- no room for doubt, but the fruits of the Spirit, consequent on the Holy Ghost's dwelling in me. Things were not so ministered to the Old Testament saints, though they may be as holy. Christ has come, was dead, has accomplished righteousness, has sat down, so now the answer to all His titles is, " To him that loveth us and washed us," etc. All the promises of God are in Him, Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us; 2 Cor. 1:20. God hath anointed us, hath sealed us. Do I doubt? What do I doubt? That the Father sent the Son for poor sinners? If you believe this, you cannot doubt that you are saved. Your salvation is based upon the unchangeable revelation of God; and what a tide of affection flows from knowing this! God, through Christ, has saved not me alone, but the whole body of saints. What a difference does it make to me, in thinking of the joy and blessedness, whether I am going alone, or in looking at many of you, and being able to say, " He has made us kings and priests! " Just exactly what He is Himself-the highest in authority, and the nearest to God. Can you all, dear friends, say this according to the Spirit, " To him that loveth us? "-so settled in the consciousness of it, that the heart can only go out in fullness of praise! If it is not so with you, dear friends, it is because you have not received the testimony of the faithful Witness, who was grace, and the Messenger of God's grace to us. The Lord give us to give place to the Holy Ghost in His thankful testimony to His love, and grant us to walk nearer to Him, in the conscious power of it.

There are certain expressions in the word of God which unfold, in the most familiar manner, what the Christian is; and which, if there was but the most ordinary attention on the part of the reader, would lead him to say, " Well, if that is what a Christian is, I know nothing of the matter."

These expressions are not the violent stretching forth after some hope, but they are characterized by the quiet certainty with which they appropriate the blessing. As John here says of all the Christians to whom he was writing, " unto him that loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood," etc. Now, if I were to ask you-you, perhaps, who would be affronted if I should say you were not a Christian-if I were to ask you, are you sure that Christ loves you? that He has washed you from your sins in His own blood? No, you would say, if honest, I know nothing of it. Yet these are the expressions of the common recognized state of Christians. Or can you say-Yes, blessed be God, though a poor thing in myself, I do know that God loves me? To be able to say this is the common portion of the believer. And so it is written, " we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." All Christians are recognized as knowing salvation. And in 2 Peter we read of one who had forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. But he could not forget what he had never known. Forgetting " that he was purged," was backsliding; the christian state was knowing that he was purged.

You will find every kind of exhortation addressed to the believer; but they are all based on the ground of his having been brought to God. I ask any one, would there not be a quieter, happier state of soul if you were certain that God loved you? There cannot be happy affections if the soul is not in confidence with God. That is the kind of knowledge of God which is life eternal. God is love, and if you do not know that, you know nothing. And where are you if you know not God? If you believed fully that God is love, love toward you, what kind of thoughts would you have of Him? Would you think that you must obey, or else He will punish you with His vengeance? Would you think of Him as a Judge? No. Such thoughts are not the thoughts of one acquainted with His saving love. Of course there is a judgment, but there is no mercy then. When Christ comes to judge, can you stand if He marks iniquity? can you answer Him for your transgressions? No. But if you really believed in His righteous judgment now, you would say, " enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." But Christ is not now a Judge; He is a Savior. It is all mercy now. He is not imputing to any their trespasses. Every eye must see Him. We Christians see Him now as a Savior. You who do not believe put it off till the judgment, hoping to be able to meet Him then; but then " all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." He is a Judge when He is not a Savior. It is judgment then, not trial as to whether you will pass. Now there is a trial going on, not indeed as to whether you are a sinner or not; but as to whether you will receive Christ or not. Now your heart is put to the test: alas! your willful heart would still reject Him, if grace does not bow you in the sense of sin. God will justify Himself in that day, and no one else. In that day He will demonstrate the sin which is the ground of the judgment. Every secret thing will then be made manifest. It is not then that the question is raised, but that the judgment is manifested. Now the question is raised. All this is brought into the soul now. In spite of all the fair appearances of the world we justify God now, we accept the judgment God gives of man now, we justify Him in condemning us. The eye of God brings the judgment into my conscience now, and I bow to it. I feel and say that God should not let such a wretch live before Him. That is what will be when every eye sees Him; but it is also what is now in the soul, when the Lord reveals to us our state by faith. I now justify God. I say I have been all darkness and sin, and I abhor myself in His presence. Conscience is dumb in the light of God. If you have been brought to this, you know yourself. If you seek to hide it you are not the better, but the worse.

Suppose that I am brought to this, I shall not now be trusting to a vague feeling that God is merciful. It was not so with Peter when he found himself a sinner in the presence of the Lord. He said, " Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." He felt that sin and Christ, as the holy Lord, should not be together. So is it ever when the soul is brought to be jealous about God. The idea of compromise is a horror to one whose conscience is active about sin. Well, when brought to this, what can the soul have confidence in? Oh! in this- that when we were in such a condition we have full assurance of the love of God toward us.

Now if I turn to nature, I see signs of goodness, but widespread misery and wretchedness too, so that I know not how to say God is love; and these very signs of goodness show me that I have lost it all, for this God I have offended. If I turn to providence, I find it all confusion-how often have the wicked the upper hand! If I look to the law, it condemns me, and leaves me without hope. In all these I see things about God; but nothing that reveals Him. In Christ I get what reveals God. I, for myself, just where I am, find that He is the " faithful witness " of God. For it is in this world, where all the sin was, that Christ was the faithful witness.

There will be no need of a witness in heaven. Now I can go to Jesus and see God in Him. Do you ever find a single act or word of this faithful Witness that was not love? Never. Of course He would unmask the hypocrite. But the moment a person is true-were he the greatest sinner in the world- the moment he is contented to be what he is in Christ's presence-you will never find that He was anything but love. Of course God must convince of sin. He will write on the sepulchers and tell what is within. God will unmask what we are; our self-deception He will discover to us; but then He is perfect love, and nothing else. What brought Christ here? To know that there was sin? Oh no! He knew it well; but He came here because there was sin. The very sin I am confounded at, is the very thing that brought Him here in love.

In the case of the woman who was a sinner, in Luke 7, Christ puts down Simon, and He does not care for the guests. Why? Because a poor woman was to be comforted in love. Christ came into the very place where sin was. If it is a question of truth, He knows my sins. When I speak of Christ loving me, it is that He loves me knowing all that I am; it is not loving, surely, the sinful condition I am in, but loving me when in it. He will write on the ground to let my conscience act; He will bring my sin into my conscience. He will not let me get satisfied with myself, but He will have me to rest in His thoughts of me. What the heart struggles to do is to be satisfied with itself; but God will break that down; and the moment you are brought to that, He will make you to be satisfied with Him, just as you are. He will not leave you there, of course; but He will have you to rest in the knowledge of His perfect love: " Unto him that loves us "; then I find rest.

But that is not all: it is added, " And washed us from our sins in his own blood." It is not said, will wash us, but has washed us. We want it now, for peace, and for holy affections.

" In his own blood." Who has done this? Christ. He has done it. He has made us " clean every whit." And if He has washed us He has done it in righteousness, knowing all our sin, and maintaining all this perfect righteousness which made us tremble because of our sins; but in accordance with it all He has washed us from our sins in His own blood. He knew what our sins were in the sight of God, and so He gave Himself up-Himself entirely He gave for me. An angel could not, nor should not, do it-he is called to keep his first estate-but Christ only. In this act of Christ in washing my sins I find Him giving His blood, His life, Himself, for me. Not one single spring do I find that was not love to me. Such is the knowledge I get of Christ.

He has washed me from my sins in His own blood. Do I believe this? Oh yes! I do. I believe that every one of them is washed away, and that He has done it, as it is said in Hebrews, " By himself purged our sins." Ah! you say, if I only felt this! But let me ask you, will your feelings add to the value of Christ's blood? Oh no! Then why not rest on it, as that which has perfectly satisfied God on account of the sins? The question of sin Christ settled between God and Himself; " When he had by himself purged our sins ": He did it according to the holiness of God, and

according to my need. And what cleanness do I get? The cleanness which God's eye requires; all that which shut us out from God being perfectly put away, so that we are brought into the light as God is in the light; and in doing it His perfect love has been revealed.

" And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." If I take a person and bring him into the enjoyment of everything that I have myself, I give the fullest proof of the perfect outgoing of my heart towards him. Kindness may give something for a person; but that is perfect love. I cannot do more. Well, that is what Christ has done. He is the King and Priest; and He makes us kings and priests too: and it is worth so much the more because it is the very thing He has Himself.

Another thing we get-the perfect love of the Father. Not the love of Jesus alone, but the love of the Father, the knowledge of which Jesus gives us. He makes us priests unto His Father. Was ever love like this? Never. Was Christ ever anything else? Never. He is nothing but this perfectness of love for us. And the sum of it all is, " he loves us." Has He anything else to say to us? No. What love had to do, it has done. Oh, in the simplicity of thankful hearts, to say, " he has made peace by the blood of his cross! " " Unto him that loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen."

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 20:5-6, Notes on

CHAPTER 20: 5, 6

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

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

This glory, which God has given to Christ, God has manifested in Jesus as man. Already, in the creation, the divine glory of the Son has been manifested, and His right of possessing all things established. Jesus created everything. He has title over creation, which can only be blessed under Him, and during His reign. God has willed that everything should be made subject to man. Adam was the head of the creation; he failed, and all failed in him and with him. Satan having gained the victory over Adam, all has fallen under the dominion of Satan, who fills the world with evil, and rules over it through the passions of men.

The question is not merely about salvation in God's counsels, but of the restoration of all things. God re-establishes everything, and man too, in introducing into the world Jesus, the Last Adam. The sons of men are not forsaken in this. God unites the church with the Last Adam. All the creation fell in the person of the first Adam, and it is the Last

who becomes the object of the counsels of God. God does not restore the first Adam; He introduces a second, the spring of life to all those who are redeemed. The word was made flesh. God became a man, in order that all things might be made subject to man, and this man is Jesus; Heb. 2; Psa. 8; 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1. The Man Jesus is set over everything.

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

The question is not to know whether Christ's reign is a spiritual or a personal reign; for the Holy Ghost does not leave us, and therefore the reign is spiritual as well as personal. But to say that Christ will not be there is to deny the reign of Christ. The Holy Ghost has not been made man, and He is not the Bridegroom of the church, and the church desires the Bridegroom. The Spirit and the bride say " Come." The Spirit does not say this to Himself; He says it to Christ. A reign of Christ without Christ is a reign without a king. It is limiting the church to the desire of what she has already, that is, the Holy Ghost. It is to confound everything in the relations of Christ as King of the earth and as Bridegroom of the church.

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

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

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

suffer to say that it is in order that my principles may reign a thousand years.

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

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

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

We read in 1 Cor. 15:23, " But every one in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming." The thought of a general resurrection is traditional, and comes from having lost sight of the perfect salvation of the church. Those who have believed are already justified, and have part in the resurrection of the just, which accomplishes their glory and their happiness. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and those that are alive shall be changed; 1 Thess. 4:13-17. There is an infinite happiness in the thought that we shall be conformed to the image of Jesus, and that we shall have the same portion with Him. If we were not kept of God, even the sight of the glory of Christ could not prevent us from falling into the hands of Satan. May this encourage us and keep us humble!

Letters 2, Annihilation; the Force of the Term "Destruction;" Eternal Punishment, The Doctrine of

Though the natural construction is "are" (Rev. 20:10), as you might insert "were," or "had been cast," inasmuch as there is no verb, it would not be wise to insist on "are" by itself. It is not "were." If it is not "are" which I think it is, it is "were cast," carrying on the sense of , but in either case takes them all in.

You are quite right as to "destruction," but some of the annihilationists here do not admit the Lord's coming. If it be admitted, then 2 Thess. 1:9 shows clearly that their use of it is false. But you have only to substitute "annihilated" for the word translated "destroyed," and the absurdity is evident. He came "to seek and to save those who were annihilated!" "O Israel, thou hast annihilated thyself, but I am thy help!" and the like. Secondly I believe death and hades (Rev. 20:13) are personified, and that at there is no more death or state of separate spirits-that is, in their separate subsisting condition of power. The power of death which Satan has is finally put an end to. But I have very little doubt that the contents of death and hell are included in them, in contrast with those in the book of life. But do not entangle yourself in volunteering explanations of difficult passages, when plain answers to error are there. The "second death" is explained in the word itself. It is the lake of fire: and in that torment is said to subsist, (not chapter 20:14) 21:8. It is-not causes-the second death; they have their part in it. If you ask me what I think of the second death, I believe it is the judicial separation of man from God, in the lake of fire, as death was the separation of soul and body. I had to meet one of these men lately, but I find that they quail before the word if it is known. It involves the immortality of the soul, and there can be no guilt or atonement for a mere beast's soul.

The non-subsequent existence of death and hades is merely a consequence drawn from general truth. They merge in the lake of fire. In the language they are personified and nothing is said of their destruction or non-existence there. I add this because they may use it as a plea that it means ceasing to exist. It does not. We find those who are looked at as living beings tormented there. It is therefore not ceasing to exist. When I interpret the passage, their power is absorbed in the lake of fire, as the kingdom in eternal glory in which it ceases to exist; and from that and other sources I see that they cease to exist, but not by the lake of fire as they pretend the wicked do. They could not say death and hades were tormented. I have no doubt at all of the meaning. But it is no proof at all that anything ceases to exist by the lake of fire as a punishment. Such a sense would not be applied to death and hell: nor in any case does torment mean ceasing to exist, for it ceases when the person tormented ceases to exist; that is, the second death is not ceasing to exist, for that is the lake of fire.

I fully hope to be in -, but I am delayed by my translation being only yet printed to end of 1 Corinthians. The Lord be graciously with you all.

Your affectionate brother in Christ.

London,

March 18th, 1871.

Letters 3, Resurrection, The

The first resurrection I believe to be one whole thing, as contrasted with the second. (Rev. 20:4, 5.) Verse 4 brings in those killed under the beast. You have the general fact, there are sitters on thrones; then you have those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and "those who"—not, and who—had not worshipped the beast. These all form part of the first resurrection, the Old Testament saints "made perfect" with us. Chapter 6:9 answers to the first specific class in this verse; those of the beast's time to the last, for whom those of chapter 6:9 wait. In this last verse there is nothing expressly of resurrection; the question is the execution of vengeance; for this, they have to wait for the last class, who are slain under the beast (such as the two witnesses), who are a kind of supplementary class, and are the saints of the high places of Dan. 7 When judgment is given to the saints (Dan. 7:22) their trials are over; the same characteristic is found in Rev. 20:4. The patience of the saints goes on till then. This is over when the Ancient of days comes. (Rev. 14:13, 14.)

Affectionately yours in the Lord Dublin, June 24th, 1880.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 21:1-8, Notes on

CHAPTER 21: 1-8

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

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

Justice shall not reign then; it shall dwell; 2 Peter 3. Perfection will not exist until God has made all things new. There is here no distinction made of a people of God amongst men.

" The tabernacle of God is with men." All is peace. God is all in all. All those who remain after the judgment are blessed together. But we have to consider whether what is called the church now shall not also be a special blessing, whether it will not be the tabernacle of God amongst men. (See Eph. 3:21.)

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

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 1, God's Dwelling With Men

Revelation 21:1-8

In this part of the chapter we have the end of all things, when the mediatorial work of Christ, even as king in subduing all things, is finished, and He has given up the kingdom that God may be all in all; when the final result is produced in the new heaven and the new earth; when the former things have passed away; when everything is in its own essential blessedness in the presence of God, and we have not only got blessing, but this in glory; it leads us in a peculiar manner to see the way in which the thought and counsel of God have been at all times to make man His dwelling-place. This is not always observed in Scripture; but when God's ways are brought out, and also particularly His holiness as it is said in the Psalms, “Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever” (Psa. 93:5), then we have the purpose of God unfolded to us to make man His dwelling-place; and therefore we find the goodness and love of God finally displayed.

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 21:3-4). The language is figurative, no doubt; but there is this full and complete effect of God's own dealing and working in the removal of everything that can create a pang. But there is more in this than that tears are wiped away: God shall do it. There is the compassion that has caused the removal of the sorrow, and this is more than that the sorrow is gone. It is God who has removed all. If the evil is gone and the sense of pain, it is God who has put them away from the heart. “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (vss. 4-6). Not only has He taken away the evil, but it is never to be any more. That is, there is now full and perfect security and blessedness. All the evil is gone, and all those things too through which man was exercised to bring him to a point where he could really meet God. The love of God takes the place of everything, and, filling all things with Himself, precludes the possibility of evil ever coming in again: the contrast of man's paradise of old, as we all know.

Then come two great principles in verses 6, 7: “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” First, there is the one who is athirst, and then the one who overcomes. These are the ways in which the Spirit works; and God always answers the workings of the Spirit. Whenever the Spirit acts in producing desires and wants (it may be at first after holiness or forgiveness, and then after communion and enjoying God), they are all perfectly satisfied in God. Therefore it is said, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life.” It is not merely, mark, the water of life that is given here; but there is given “of the fountain,” that which springs up in the presence of God. What a thing to find! Thus the soul is

perfectly satisfied with the fountain of blessedness for which he is thirsting, even God Himself, whom he is rendered capable of enjoying. He is at the wellspring.

The second principle is that he that overcomes shall inherit. Here we find not desires satisfied, but difficulties overcome. It was so with Jesus Himself, as it is said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21). “He that overcometh shall inherit these things,” as associated with Christ, “and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev. 21:7). He comes into immediate connection with God. In the one we have the satisfaction of spiritual wants, in the other the relationship wherein we stand. This is the general thought. Such is the state and condition of those spoken of; but there is another point which deserves to be enlarged on a little more, and that is the personal happiness found in it. There is no longer a Mediator, no longer the need of one; there is no more the need of mercy and grace found to help in the time of need.

When we come a little closer, there are other things that claim attention. We have here, “Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people” (Rev. 21:3). His dwelling-place is with men. It is no more an individual or a national thing. Of course the wicked are put away; but God's dwelling-place is no longer with the Jews, but with men. And this too is to be noticed, that the church has a very peculiar place.

The thought of God was to be with men, dwelling and abiding with them. Christ dwelt here among men, but it was a short time, and now He is cast out; but that will be another thing. Nor will it be as He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even Christ's stay was to end; but not so the dwelling of God by-and-by. Neither is it simply men made blessed; but God will dwell with them. Such is the distinctive, eternal character of blessing; but also the church is to possess it in a peculiar way, already remarked on in this passage. It is not life only, but the presence of God with men as His abiding-place to reveal Himself and bless them fully.

If we look back at Adam and his dwelling-place, we shall not find this. God did not, could not, stay there. Man was then put under responsibility to see if God could stay there. The question of obedience had to be settled; and we know how it was settled. Man disobeyed and was cast out. The test was the stability of the creature; it was no question of divine work in grace. God, therefore, in no wise dwelt there. But on man's sin He revealed the assurance of the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. As the first man, Adam, had failed under the serpent's craft, the last Adam was to come and destroy his power. So said God when pronouncing on the serpent. There was this revelation; but the world went on so badly that the flood came and took them all away, save Noah and his family, whom God rescued in the ark.

Yet the next thing we hear of the world is that men set about in the plain of Shinar to defy God, centralize man, and possess the earth in their own might and for their own name; just as men will do by-and-by in a yet more daring way, but Jehovah will confound them also, as He did at Babel. Thus, we see, by His judgment, the world ordered into nations and tongues; and the very fact of the existence of different tongues shows that men are separated into nations. This took its rise at Babel; so that the children of men could no longer understand each other. And still there are these peoples and tongues, nations and families. Thus the world was settled then.

But another thing comes out: “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham” (Acts 7:2). He said, as it were, You must have done with all this: it is the world. You must leave your country, and kindred, and father's house. I must have a people in the world. This was the call of Abram. But though we hear of the calling of God, and the election of God, and the promises of God, we have no such thing as God dwelling with Abram or the patriarchs. We know, in fact, that Abram did not leave his father's home at once, though he did quit his country; in other words, he had not done with the flesh. But when Terah was dead, then he blessedly went on as a pilgrim, and God visited him in a lovely way, showing him His goodness and grace; not, of course, in such spiritual depth and fullness as now, but brightly and beautifully, as in Genesis 17-18. He was the olive-tree or stock of God, as we read in Romans 11. Still there was yet no dwelling-place for God. He visits and gives him the promises. This was all right so far as it went; and though Abraham's faith failed in Egypt, yet in the main he walked blessedly as a pilgrim. But though God visited him and talked with him, there was yet nothing of redemption seen as a ground-work for God to abide with men.

At Egypt came the question which was to be the type of redemption: so mercy put the blood on the lintel as a figure of Christ. Then the children of Israel go through the Red Sea as the sign of the death and resurrection of Christ. Then we find redemption—the active intervention of God to make good the promises made. We have not now a promise of something to be given, but actual deliverance, as it is said in Exodus 19:4: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.” So it is said (1 Peter 3:18), “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Not our poor vile bodies—they are not yet brought to God; but our souls are truly redeemed. A work has been wrought so absolute in its nature for the putting away of sin, that now there is not a single thing (morally I mean) between God and him who has part in it; and not only is there nothing in us by which sin can be imputed, but we have been brought nigh to God.

Say, are you brought nigh to God? You say, I am hoping to get there. Then you have not been brought there, for He does not bring half way. But Christ has brought us nigh to God. He represents us in the presence of God. The putting away of sin is accomplished, or it never can be, for Christ cannot die over again. The work is done, but also the people are brought out. All that hindered God having them is put away by blood-shedding; but also they are taken out of the condition in which they were and are brought to God, to “walk in the light as he is in the light” (1 John 1:7). And so it is with the believer now.

It is a very different thought to say, One day I hope to come, from saying, I am come. It is all grace: that we know. But now there is nothing between me and God—of course, there is the blessed Mediator—but I mean there is no evil; it is all cast into the depths of the sea; and we are in His presence “holy and without blame.” And what is the consequence of this? That God can dwell among us and in us. If you look at Exodus 15:2, you will see how He brings it out, consequent on their deliverance from Egypt, “The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation.” And in Exodus 29:45, God declares that this was His own thought: “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.”. This is just the language applied to the church. We shall see the church brought out later. But He brought Israel into the land to dwell among them, and He did dwell among them, as we know, for the Shechinah just means a tabernacle or dwellingplace of glory.

We get this immense truth, which we are almost afraid to look in the face, that, when sin is put away and we are brought to God, He dwells in and among us. Just as Solomon said, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee” (2 Chron. 6:18). What a truth this is, that God has so perfectly sanctified the people in order to manifest Himself, that He

comes and dwells among them! And where was Jehovah to dwell? In Israel; and all nations were to come there and see His glory; as it will be again in the latter day. It was all spoiled and corrupted: this is another thing; but it was set up that He might be inquired of by the nations.

You will find another thing connected with this, that, except the setting apart of the sabbath, the first time holiness is spoken of is in Exodus 15. Every saint had it, of course, in his heart and ways; but it was not brought out before. But the moment they sing this at the Red Sea, “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness,” the command is, “Sanctify yourselves,” that is, walk in holiness. The great truth comes out that in redemption the person is brought to God. We also find these companion-truths that the people are sanctified fully, and God is dwelling among them.

There is a people set apart for God, and what characterized them was His own dwelling among them. This itself is an immense truth. It is thoroughly followed out in Christianity, not in figure but in the reality of truth, through the true blood-shedding of the Lamb of God and perfect cleansing from sin, and real deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby we are brought nigh to God.

But now another thing comes in, that where one gets this full blessedness is in Christ: not Christ in us (however true), but we in Him. And you will find this connected with the fact that He is dwelling with us. There is not a spot left on the man that is set apart as redeemed and purchased and perfected forever, Christ having borne his sins in His work of redemption. The believer stands in all the efficacy of Christ's work. Suppose you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your sins have not finally and definitely been put away, they never can be; or else Christ must die again, and He never can. But, blessed be God, He has put away sin, as we find in Hebrews 10:11-12, “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.” He is not standing, but is set down, for the work is done. There we find perfect cleansing through the blood-shedding, as it was said to Israel, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex. 12:13).

But then we find another thing in the death and resurrection of Christ. I have One passed out of this world (of course, in spirit, He never was of it, this blessed, Holy One, but as to His actual presence here). He is gone as man into another scene, as risen, having passed through the Red Sea, or death, and gone to God as man. Thus we see not only the putting away of sin, but Christ entering into another scene; and now we see not only God dwelling with man, but man with God. Christ has gone into God's presence as the Redeemer, presenting Himself to God for us, and we stand in His presence in Christ. How is this? He sends the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, and our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We have this wonderful and blessed truth as the result of redemption accomplished and sin put away. We are partakers of the death and resurrection of Christ. He is gone into heaven presenting His own blood. We are cleansed, and our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit, and thus we become individually His dwelling-place.

It is true again of the church of God, as it is said, “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). Thus the church of God became the habitation of God. This is a wonderful and blessed position, and we have it in a special manner by the Head being in heaven, as the Lord Himself said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20). This expresses our union with Christ; as it is said in Ephesians 5:30, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Such is the special and blessed character of the church. It is the habitation of God, and will be so till the day it is taken up to be with the Lord. This is indeed a wonderful thing, and shows us what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation. The individual may fail, and the church of God may fail, and has failed, so as to have become the very seat of Satan (I mean those professing to be the church now); but this has not altered the truth that, wherever we find the true church, it is the habitation of God. It is not merely that life is there hidden as we get in Colossians, but manifested, as in Ephesians; it is brought out. It is the Holy Spirit in the individual man, though His presence may perhaps only be known by a groan. I am not speaking now of how all this has been corrupted and spoiled. This is truth also. But so is this other thing with regard to the individual that Christ is in him, and he is in Christ. This is true of the church too, if it knows its place. It is more than being the mere dwelling-place of God. We have union with the Head in heaven. We are members individually; we are also collectively the body of Christ. Hence the exhortation, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4:30), and therefore, the church ought to be as a city set on a hill.

Thus, we have here two things: first, God dwelling among us; and secondly, and what specially characterizes the church, it is one with Christ. But let us follow farther. When we come to the kingdom, we have this union fully accomplished, being in heaven in the body. We go into our Father's house; not only does He dwell in us, but we have association with Christ—a place in the Father's house. I can say, the Head is in heaven, and He is going to take me there to His own dwelling-place; just as He taught us before He went up, “In my Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself” (John 14:2-3). Not only so, but we have boldness to go there now in spirit; and He will come again and receive those whom now He is not ashamed to call brethren, when He comes to display His glory in connection with this world, and the heavenly Jerusalem becomes the dwelling-place of God. As John says, “I saw no temple therein” (Rev. 21:20).

Supposing, in order to explain things, there had been a temple, and God dwelling in it as among the Jews, there He was hidden, so that even the high priest could not go in but once a year; and even then none saw Him. Though glory was there, it was a glory which was hid. It was then in darkness, except what light the glory itself gave. Here “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple” (Rev. 21:20). If I may so speak, His own glory is the temple. Therefore there is no light there; “The Lamb is the light thereof,” or the lamp of it, as the word should be rendered.

Behold the blessed picture of this in the transfiguration. We see Peter, James, and John, men on the earth; Moses, Elias, and Christ representing men in glory, and then they enter the Shechinah, which, I have no doubt, was the cloud which overshadowed them, of which they were afraid as they entered. As for Peter, he was so astonished that he did not know what to say, and proposed to build three tabernacles, where each could preside as three oracles. But then comes the excellent glory which overshadows them, and they hear the Father's voice saying, “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). In this scene we see the three things which shall be in the kingdom. We find here (Rev. 21) the same thing, the heavenly Jerusalem coming down, and we have the purpose of God when all is done. We know that it is the church, for it is called the bride, the Lamb's wife, and only the church is suited to be thus associated with Christ.

The tabernacle of God will be with men. Not only He is with them, but there is the tabernacle, —the church, and He dwells in it. Here is the full and blessed result of God dwelling with men, and also the tabernacle; for we shall have been taken up and given this heavenly character.

It is a great truth that there is even now the dwelling-place of God. It is not only that we have life and are happy in heaven, but here we are the habitation of God. Let me ask, What is the full fruit of redemption? God dwelling in us. And look at the practical effect of this. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 5:5), which is the only spring of our thoughts and feelings, so that nothing else can come in. And cannot we understand how holiness ensues? Of course it must, and divine judgment too, as it is said, “Judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 5:17), for nothing that defiles can be in His presence anywhere, and of all places not there where He dwells. Thus holiness is founded on redemption, being intimately connected with God's dwellingplace. You will see how all is founded on redemption. Adam innocent could not get it. He listened to Satan and ate the forbidden fruit, and so was driven out.

A new thing comes in—redemption. The Son of God came and brought the responsibility of man to its full, final, test. They would not have Him. He would not condemn till the iniquity was full; but when they rejected the Son, it was full. They afterward despised the Holy Spirit, but at the cross it was full. Then comes in the fruit of redemption, taking man out of that scene of judgment by One glorifying God perfectly. Now that redemption is wrought, the sin is put out of God's sight and deliverance is given, which we enter into by faith; and those who are now brought to God by the power of redemption are not now as man under responsibility to answer for himself and find he is good for nothing, but through the work of Christ they are brought into the new creation; as it is said, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). He belongs not to the old creation (of course his body does; but I am not speaking of that: the man himself does not), but to the new creation, as it is said, “That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures,” James 1:18. The church of God is such.

We see that God has not done some little good for us, but He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. We have become His dwelling-place, and what, do I find as to this holiness which comes in? I am not my own, I am bought with a price. I am sanctified to God, and I must bring the heavenly atmosphere to bear on my ways, habits, and feelings, and grow up unto Him in all things who is the Head, and know more of Christ every day. What a character of holiness belongs to the Christian and to the church of God! “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4:30).

Let me ask you how you treat this divine guest. I am now speaking reverentially of God's presence. How often do you think of it in the day, that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit? If the queen were to come, and for a time take up her abode with any of us, we should think of nothing else. I am now speaking of the respect which every person ought to feel towards her. Supposing I were to forget her presence, it would be a shame to me, and the fact of neglecting her would fill me with shame and bitterness. But what of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us? We think not of it half the day; we think of it, if we do all things so as to please the Lord. I am called to walk worthy of this; I must keep the temple pure. We fail, it is true, and then comes in the intercession of Christ. But such is the character that belongs to us. 0, if our hearts only thought of it, His presence in us is far more blessed than when God dwelt in the temple! Though not so palpable, it is far more real. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus sent down the Comforter to dwell here? Of course, as God, He is everywhere. Do you believe that the Son came down? As God, He was everywhere, and yet He came down; and so with the Holy Spirit. He did come down, and where does He dwell? In our bodies and in the church of God. And what kind of persons ought these to be?

Where is He, the Holy Spirit? Has He gone and left the earth? No, blessed be God, and never will, till Christ comes and takes up the church, and then the Holy Spirit will be taken up too, though He will not, even then, cease working. But He is with us even now, and will be till then, unless we say that God has abandoned the earth, which is not true. Where, then, is the sign of His presence, the witness that He is here? There are no such things as miracles now, and I do not expect there will be again, except in the devil's power.

But, practically, what are we to look for? We are to see how far we in heart, conduct, ways, spirit and manner, are walking on the earth in the power of the Spirit. Only let us see that all these things are the fruit of accomplished redemption. How could we talk so if we were only looking at ourselves? But the Holy Spirit comes as the seal and value of Christ's work. He produces fruit after, when He comes witnessing to the efficacy of Christ's work. Just as the priests under the law were first washed with water, next sprinkled with blood, and then anointed with oil, the Spirit comes, not as the seal of the fruits He produces, but as the seal of Christ's work, and then the fruit follows.

And thus it is we get peace. It is by the Spirit testifying to the efficacy of Christ's work. Being convicted of sin, we flee to Christ and submit to God's righteousness, looking at the value of Christ's blood; and then peace comes, the Holy Spirit being the witness and seal. And then the exhortation applies, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). So it was with the children of Israel. It was not said to them, “See the progress you have made; see you have left Succoth; see you have packed up the dough in your troughs”; no, but “See the salvation of the Lord!” (Ex. 14:13). That which distinguishes the effect of redemption is the presence of the Holy Spirit; we enjoy it as the fruit of Christ's work. Is this your case? Do you believe that you are redeemed? You speak of Christ as the Redeemer. What has He done for you? Has He left you in Egypt? He has taken you out of it, if you are a believer, and He is gone into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. All exercise of heart before we believe is to convince us that we are without strength. And what can we do? If we are really powerless, what can we do but “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord”? Then I can say, I am not in Egypt at all. I have got the journey through the wilderness, and exercises of heart there, and conflict in Canaan when I have left the wilderness, but always with the certainty of being redeemed.

The Lord give us to know that the place we hold on earth by redemption is to be the habitation of God through the Spirit individually, and as the church of God, and to feel “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation” (2 Peter 3:11), and that “holiness becometh” His “house forever! “God will carry this on till the time of the new heaven and the new earth; and even then He speaks of the tabernacle of God being with men in connection with the place we have got into in Christ. The Lord give us to know by faith now that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit; that we are not our own, but bought with a price!

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry, Prophetic Inquiry, Reflections Upon the: 1

The existing circumstances of the church of God seem to call upon those who earnestly desire its welfare, not to hold back from expressing that which may, in any way, tend to the strengthening of faith and healing those divisions which, while they destroy charity and the fellowship one with another that is proper to walking in the light, weaken the testimony, which is held out to the unconverted or to the inquirer, of the everlasting truth of God. It appears to me that, on the subject of prophecy (divisions on which now shame godliness), both those who hold and those who strenuously oppose views, wind, for convenience's sake we may call Millennarian, are deeply culpable. Many have written on one

side and the other ignorant of each other's views, and precipitate and unwarranted in their inferences from them; and, while those who hold the views of prophecy, which have occasioned the controversy, have indulged in language utterly inconsistent with the spirit of their Master, those who are unconvinced by them, though charging this exclusively on the Millennarians, are themselves, it appears to me, in no way free from blame. Superciliousness, distrust, and animosity (not perhaps so distinctly expressed, because new views are generally the most active and forward, but quite as evil in their character and spirit) have marked their conduct and language; while those who sought instruction, and to whom the others were debtors for it, have been hindered, perplexed, and repelled in their inquiries by the selfish precipitancy of the one and presuming ignorance of many connected with them, and the uncandid uninquiring rejection and denouncement of the other. There is no one at all observant of what is now existing, and interested in the strengthening of humble souls, bet must feel the culpable responsibility in which many leaders of the professing church are involved.

There are some observations I would make on these subjects, being convinced of the extreme precipitancy in which many have written upon them; and I think that in such a time (though I am persuaded the purposes of God will eventually result and His glory be manifested in our weakness), there should be a disposition to try more maturely the soundness of our views and statements alleged to be from scripture, before truth and the value of the sacred scriptures themselves are brought into question, perplexity, and disgrace, by the presumptuous and hasty pursuit, not of scriptural truth, but of our own untried thoughts, given out to a greedy public, glad of novelty, which has no requisition of sanctification attached to it, and ready to neglect their own souls for unfounded and idle speculations.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that the scriptures of God have not been written to no purpose; that as His provision for His saints, the prophetic like all other parts of them have a sanctifying, strengthening and directing influence. What God thought it worth while to order and arrange, as ministering to the ends of His glory and man's participation in it, and to reveal (that is, to communicate) to man, as that in which he is concerned, must be surely worth while for man to inquire into and be informed of; and they seem guilty of presumption who would arraign the value and importance of what God thought fit to reveal. The fact of God's revelation to one who knows what God is (in a word, to a believer) is demonstrative evidence of its vast importance and his interest in it; and when it comes from God to man, is man to say it is not of importance?

These truly are the themes which have called forth most the admiration and praise of those who have seen God in them; nor can any one believe rightly in His saving love, who is not deeply interested in the manner by which its results are accomplished. The argument that prophecy is only available as an evidence of revelation after its fulfillment, not to reason upon general grounds, seems to have little weight. All the prophecies testify of facts which require a certain line of conduct at or previous to their fulfillment; and though they are evidence of themselves as a revelation, and of the value of the prophesied fact, there are few instances of this being of importance after their fulfillment. Besides, many of them unequivocally relate to the closing period of the world; and it would be hard to say of what avail these could be for the purpose stated. And further, almost all which are considered as fulfilled prophecies by those who use this argument, were expressly delivered as testimonies to the consciences of men immediately concerned in them, previously to their fulfillments. Will any one say, that the direction of our Lord to His disciples were of no interest, and not important to be understood previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, and merely that this destruction might accredit His testimony? Were. Jeremiah's urgent remonstrances and warnings not to be inquired into before the Chaldeans took the city? And shall it be said that the solemn testimony to Israel put them under no responsibility, but were useless declamations, till the kings of Assyria had been the means of burying them in yet unveiled oblivion? There seems to be something of infidelity in all this. Or do they argue that God is less concerned in the church now, or that the Lord now will not do good, neither will He do evil? Besides, they leave, arguing in the present time, a large scope of prophecy unfulfilled, which manifestly cannot be of any direct avail subsequent to its fulfillment; and yet they would afford us no assignable cause why it has been revealed at all.

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry, Prophetic Inquiry, Reflections Upon the: 2

Now they say it does not tend to sanctification. But man is not a judge of this; he would still be sanctifying the church in his own way. I am persuaded that God never revealed anything without a sanctifying purpose for His nature is holy, His purpose holiness; and I believe the sober and holy study of the word of God, as such, in His fear, will concentrate the affections upon Him, separate from the world, and give enlarged views Of His kingdom, wisdom, and glory, peculiarly calculated to sink in our estimation this world—its glory, its strength; and to fix our minds on the Lamb's glory. There is in fact in these objections a tendency to depreciate the purposes of God in scripture, to preserve the importance of man's little sphere of views.

On the other hand, the extreme precipitancy with which the subject has been taken up has led—which has given occasion to this part of the charge—to unjust estimate of the use, and value, and seasonable application of those truths. Men have sought to please themselves, instead of edifying themselves or their neighbors. Let men either inquire humbly, using God's word to God's purposes, or else refrain from seeking to affect the minds of others. Loquacity or forwardness on religious subjects is a great hindrance to real edification. “If any man speak; let him speak as the oracles of God,” as those who have something to say on God's behalf, or else use the modesty which becomes those who only seek for truth. One other complaint is to be made against those who oppose these views, and it is a serious one. Instead of weighing what has been advanced by others in the spirit of serious inquiry, separating the chaff from the wheat, and willing to see the use which God might make of their brethren's testimony; jealous of the tone which they assumed, and hurt by their charges against them, they irritably throw the whole of their views overboard, without inquiring what the scripture itself says upon the subject; and then, to justify themselves, endeavored all they could to show, in the darkest colors, every part of the system, and bring up reasons against the whole. But if there be any truth in these things, they are defrauding themselves; and it is a poor compensation to prove their brethren wrong.

In many things alas! we are divided enough—enough exposed to the enemy not to be opposed to one another in our very hopes. Surely they should give some just sense, if they think those to whom they are opposed in the wrong. For my own part, if I were bound to receive all that has been said by the Millennarians, I should reject the whole system; but their views and statements weigh with me not one feather. But this does not hinder me from, inquiring by the teaching of the same Spirit (which in measure, I believe, directed them) what God has with infinite graciousness revealed to me concerning His dealings with the church.

I confess the modern Writers on prophecy justly chargeable with following their own thoughts hastily, and far too much removed from the control of scripture. They have got some general view, perhaps sound, of God's purpose. They take some text or prophecy as a starting-point, pursue the suggestions of their own minds in connection with their general views previously adopted, but leave the results almost entirely untried by the direct testimony of the word, affording us theories, often enlarging when by a writer much imbued with scripture, often of general soundness of view though replete with false statements: but, when not by such a writer, diverging into absurdities calculated to awaken the impatience of many and bring the truth of all into dishonor. In the meanwhile the church is distracted. There is not a single writer whose writings I have seen (unless it be the author of one short inquiry) who is not chargeable with this fault. Some of the most confident really call for much reprobation. But good, I am persuaded, will grow out of it; and the very difficulties will call, under God's Spirit, the attention of the faithful servant of God. And while the precipitancy of the others will be repressed by the distinct manifestation of the error into which it has led thorn and the calm statement of truth, those who have hitherto rejected even inquiry will yield themselves to much they have scorned, and be humbled both to the acknowledgment of a common truth and of the spiritual sincerity of many against whom they have been bitter, because they could not convince them, when in truth it was their own fault. I would call upon the servants of God to pray that He would guide and direct His church by His Spirit in these things in sober and subdued meekness, and it will surely be led into all truth. I shall take notice (with this feeling) of some things which seem to me illustrative of the unguarded, unscriptural statements, many of which, I think, have dishonored scripture, and been spoken ignorantly; and, I shall, secondly, propose some grounds of inquiry, to those who have hitherto repudiated these views.

These views trench upon many habits in which religions teachers have for the most part been formed—many views in which they have long had their boast. No man likes to give up these: their relative consequence is lost; it is distinguishing to oppose them. “No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better:” Many of the subjects mentioned in the foregoing pages are of themselves of deep interest, much as the use of prophecy generally, and materially affecting the present views of men on the subject; but it has not been attempted to dwell upon them at length here: other occasions, or a better instrument, perhaps, may draw them out into more useful and instructive relief. My object is unpretending and simple, and I pursue it at once: it has been some time on my mind, though withheld hitherto.

The observations on the , published in the Christian Examiner (sound in criticism, and temperate in spirit, and calculated to be useful), point out an instance of the extreme carelessness with which bold statements are made by writers on these subjects: but having been there discussed, I omit it here.

There is an error of another kind, small in importance, perhaps, because of obvious correction, but illustrative of the way in which men inconsiderately make statements, when they fall in with their system, in the face of the simplest testimony of scripture itself. In the third and fourth sermons on Daniel's vision of the four beasts and of the Son of man by Mr. Irving, Zephaniah is stated to have prophesied before the carrying away of Israel captive; and it is assumed that they carried the book of that prophet to Nineveh, whereby Nineveh would know of its threatened judgments. The prophet addressed Judah alone, and expressly states that he prophesied in the reign of Josiah (that is, about one hundred years after the carrying away Israel captive). The reason of the statement is to show that God gave testimony to Nineveh and her king, before He judged them He certainly had done so previously by Jonah. The idea is a very laudable one: but, running away with it, we have the following passage in page 92: “Yet God suffered not such a city to perish without witnesses, but raised certain of the captivity to the highest offices in the kingdom.” &c. “There can be no doubt, also, that the prophecies of Nahum and of Zephaniah, which almost solely concern the judgment upon Nineveh, and which was given before the captivity of Israel, were carried with the captives into Nineveh, and there more or less circulated amongst the Ninevites, and especially brought to the knowledge of the king himself; for God is very merciful,” &c. They say much of taking scripture as it presents itself. Who would suppose that all that concerned Nineveh in the prophecy of Zephaniah was three verses, bringing it amongst the many other countries which were to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar—the whole book being concerning him, Jerusalem, its present evil, and future hopes; and this, as we have said, a century after Israel was carried into captivity! We take it as showing the extreme neglect of scripture and even prophecy itself, the hurried pursuit of an object in the mind, something brought in at random to illustrate it, without any reference or mature weighing as to whether it is borne out by scripture.

I think the interpretation of Isaiah in the same page erroneous, and the occasion of the error the same: but as this might seem to involve interpretation, I do not say anything of it, though I think the case perfectly clear, and that the simple reading of the prophecy will evince the total inapplicability of the alleged meaning. Another instance, upon which it is not proposed to dwell, but mentioned as occurring in the same book, is in a long dissertation to show that the Greek empire was set up in order to give prevalence to the Greek language. This, though a collateral result, is; I think, a very confined view, and in itself exhibits the absorption of mind into its present idea, which I complain of as so injurious, and, in the case of scripture, so very culpable. But it is there stated, that our Lord and His apostles always quote from the Septuagint. This is not the fact, as has been fully shown.

Again, in the translator's preliminary discourse to Ben-Ezra, we have (p. Iv.), “And to this effect I understand Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation' (, i. e. judgment),” &c. The word is without a single various reading in Wetstein or Griesbach. Doubtless he had in mind John 5:24, where it is . If this were an isolated act of inadvertency, it might well be passed over; but it is evidence, and accumulated evidence, of great carelessness. And it is adduced on this account, that it is introduced by the author as determining the sense of an important passage, to which, at the time of stating it, it is evident, he could not have referred; not merely from the mistake itself, but because the whole passage (and this is the point I would urge) bears in, a long train of argument upon subjects totally unconnected with the one he is arguing, and in which , in his view of it, would have no place or object. That which we advert to is not the casual mistake, but the drawing in a whole passage into a purpose beside its object, through absorption of mind into one particular view.

And in this place we cannot pass over, though it cannot be treated as a mistake, passages in this preface highly injurious to the work and honor of Christ, and in it the just, holy, and influencing comfort of believing saints. It is alike indicative of the same hasty pursuit of a single idea. I shall quote one concentrating sentence; but the observations will apply to the whole spirit shown from pp. 55-65 of this preface. The haste, the very culpable haste (for the promises and hopes of God's people are not thus to be trifled with), is shown in this. In evincing (the truth of which we do not now inquire into) that the resurrection at Christ's coming is the substantive hope of the church, he attempts this by throwing every cloud upon the hope of the dying Christian. “Death,” his words are, “is a parting, not a meeting; it is a sorrowful parting, notes joyful meeting; it is a parting in feebleness and helplessness to we know not whither—into a being we know not what.” This sentence is singularly unfortunate in its statements; and, indeed, scripture and the hope of the gospel are not to be thus made the slave of men's momentary thoughts. “I have a desire,” says the apostle, “to depart and be with Christ.” Death to the believer is not a parting but a meeting,

if our central and supreme affections are with Christ. I am not questioning here, be it remembered, the hope of Christ's coming, but Mr. Irving's statements respecting death. Death is not a sorrowful parting, but a joyful meeting; for it does not become us to sorrow as those without hope. For why? Those that sleep in Jesus go to Jesus, and God brings them with Him. For indeed “he that liveth and believeth in Jesus shall never die.” If, indeed, he values earthly things more than Christ's presence, then sorrow will accompany his death. But it is the proper distinction of Christianity to have neutralized that power of death which Mr. Irving is preaching; “for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;” but both are dead to the believer in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior. It is a parting not in but With feebleness and helplessness, we know whither that is, to Christ. If He be true, we know whither we go, and the way. As to “a being we know not what,” the scripture affirms it really of the state of the risen body, and of that only. “It doth not yet appear,” saith the apostle, “what we shall be,” speaking expressly of that state.

As to the promise, Mr. Irving is writing against his own opinions; for, if he hold that Christ will come again, he believes that He will bring His saints with Him, so that they which are alive and remain have no preference. He is indeed himself witness that Scripture is conclusive as to a paradise for the separated spirit; but he says we know not what it is. Is there nothing, then, in being with Christ the Savior, Who loved us, and gave Himself for us—the hope that brightened the thoughts and quickened the expectations of many a dying and many a martyred saint? Is there nothing in being with Him, to throw holy influence and triumphant character on the relinquishment of this yet evil and Satan-deceived world? Sure I am, there was that in it which made the Apostle Paul prefer death to life; for death was no death to him, but parting from trial to Christ, from perseverance through surrounding evil to that blessed presence, where all doubt, sorrow, and death would have passed away to him forever. He had a desire to depart and be with Christ, he was not comforted only by the building of God not made with hands; for he was always confident, desiring rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

We must say that this is a most unholy misstatement of scripture, and destructive of that which is the glory and influential power, as well of the resurrection of the saints, as of their present hopes; and that, if the Lord's presence be not a paramount blessing, prevailing over death now, it will never be at the resurrection, or at any other time. It proves the folly of man in his thoughts; for, in attempting to show the importance of his views above another's, the sole thing which is of power in those very views and can alone realize them is undermined and destroyed, and this in the face of the fullest and most anxious statements of scripture, and to the dishonor of Christ and the faith of the saints of God, Satan reigns by death; Christ has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. And to argue from the circumstances of His death is folly; for it was because He so suffered, and (having overcome in full conflict with the very power under which it is here stated we rest) rose again into glory, that we have not that trial, that we are delivered and triumph, and that its power is passed away toward us.

The observations from the Apocalypse are a total misapprehension of its force. This might call for much and varied animadversion; but my object is not to condemn or accuse (God forbid that it should be!) but precisely the contrary. But these are the soft of statements which have awakened the impatience of observant Christians, and occasioned a natural, though indeed an unjust, prejudice against the persons who hold those views they are urged in maintenance of, and a hasty rejection (still more foolish) of the views themselves. For in this they are making themselves servants to the unguarded precipitancy of others, not judges of it, and masters of the truths which they confound with so many misstatements. In a word, they are allowing Satan to do just what he meant to do by the partial ignorance of inquiring men

But it must be confessed, it is a bold word to utter, that when Christ said to the thief on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise” —that which made Paul always confident, giving him, upon the common faith of God's people, a desire to depart—that what the Lord comforted and assured the thief with, and the apostle built on, was “a day of death, from sight of which the soul shrinketh, and a void behind it, so vacant and unintelligible, as not to be available for any distinct end of faith, hope, edification, or comfort.” “And this notion of blessedness with Christ, upon our leaving this tabernacle, is a vague notion which Satan hath substituted.” Christ substituted it as something nearer to the dying thief, when he proposed that on which the writer so much insists; and it was because it was a distant hope, and there would have been a vague void without this revelation, that we were given the assurance that that was revealed in great mercy, which is thus now thrown to the dogs. The hope of the individual is being with Christ; the hope of the church is His coming: doubtless the individual is deeply interested in this hope likewise. On the whole, throughout this preface, Christ's present glory is not duly seen, nor its perception by the believer as manifested by Him, as it is not to the world.

(To be continued.)

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry, Prophetic Inquiry, Reflections Upon the: 3

But, perhaps, we are passing our subject. I shall therefore next take notice, merely with this view, of a commonly current work, “The Cry from the Desert,” in the hope that it may lead to a more accurate examination of scripture itself, before any of the writings of men on this subject are adopted or rejected. This is what I would press and urge upon every one: to apply themselves, for themselves, to the testimony of scripture, to draw ideas simply and directly from this (and I can assure them, they will ever find them sanctifying ideas), but trust no man's mind, whether millennarian or post-millennarian; to use the scriptural rule— “Prove all things, and hold fast that which is, good;” to adopt nothing unexamined, and to reject nothing unexamined, however weak it may be in positions. if taken in itself, it may distract; if it lead to the examination of scripture, it may prove the indirect source of abundant knowledge and grace.

It is not my object to enter generally upon the character of this tract. I dare say the writer's mind aimed at more fully exhibiting the purposes of God; but, by undue confidence, the result has been to overrun scripture, and exhibit, as it appears to me, only his own weakness. It is this I would deprecate. The energy of new apprehensions, doubtless, is often valuable; but in man's hands it often degenerates into the truthless and unprofitable display of crude conceptions of our own. Let us compare the following passages, after which we will enter into detail.

I can readily conceive, however, that these accompaniments of the divinity, with all the attendant miracles with which the heavenly Jerusalem is surrounded, will never be exposed to the unsanctified gaze of any but the holy nation; and that, as I shall hereafter attempt to show, only of its most holy and privileged orders. I cannot afford you a more simple or expressive illustration of this sacred seclusion of the heavenly city, than was afforded me in reading the very interesting narrative of Captain Hall's visit to the Loo Choo Islands in the Eastern Ocean, about four or five hundred miles south of Japan wherein he states, that although he anchored off their shores for several months, and during the time had, by dint of the most confiding overtures, and the most unwearied perseverance, contrived to establish a friendly intercourse with the

natives, yet neither persuasions, entreaties, nor threats, could ever induce them, in their most unguarded moments, to allow him, or any of his company, to make any approaches into the interior of the country, where the king's palace was situated. Nay, all scrupulously jealous were they of Captain Halls inquiries relative to the king, his government, or even his private establishment and family, that they would never enter into conversation upon the subject, and scarcely mention his name. I can, therefore, easily picture to myself that the more immediate residence, the court of the Sing of the whole earth (to use an expression more familiar to our present conceptions), will be most sacredly guarded against, the approach of any but the highly privileged nation; as it is written, “Nothing unholy or uncircumcised shall enter therein.”

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, and showed me that [great] city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz;” the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold; as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations [of them which are saved] shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor unto it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

Can anything more display or condemn the light spirit in which God's purposes are taken up, than the contrasts of these two passages? How blessed and full of blessings is the latter! how full of sanctifying and exalting truths and images! His friend, however, suggests the difficulty “If this be so, how can, the kings of the earth offer Him their homage?” He replies, “I have anticipated this objection, as I find it written in Ezekiel, that the prince himself shall worship in the temple: that is, worship God the Father. And as I will undertake to prove to you, the temple can only be erected in earthly Jerusalem, I thence infer, that the Prince will likewise there give His audiences, on set days, to the kings of the earth, who shall hold their kingdoms there at His hand, and will there receive their gifts of fealty to their great Head.” But this merely proves what, we are here animadverting upon the entire neglect of scriptural statements, and loss of scriptural objects, and their power, in the hasty pursuit of our own thoughts. The writer has framed his system of the two cities over against each other in the holy oblation, and he had to solve the objection, which he does, so as to relieve his own system from it as stated, but proving utter neglect of scripture. For, instead of going there to receive their homage, the scripture states that the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor unto it.

I do not intend to pursue the comparison of the passages, for they are sufficiently obvious to the most unobservant; but I confess I pity the mind which could interpret the statement in the Revelation into a sort of box, in which the Lord was to be shut to prevent anybody seeing Him; like a certain king whom Captain Hall went to visit. This may be immaterial; but I affirm that the scope of the statement, generally, is directly opposed to the scope and object of the testimony of God in the latter part of the Revelation, and flowing from simple Ignorance of the intention, meaning, and principles of interpretation of the passage and book in which it is found. To make good this, I prefer to invite the minute comparison of others, than to introduce here my own; because my object is not to interpret but to comment on the neglect of scripture with which some pursue their own thoughts.

But beside the strange moral confusion as to the passage in the Revelation, and inconsistency too with the system the author affects (he must forgive me) to have gone so far into, his statement is entirely foreign from the passage in Ezekiel. The passages are these (Ezek. 45:6), “And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion; it shall be for the whole house of Israel.” Compare this simple statement with the endless conjectures from the wandering mind of the writer of this tract. Again, (Ezek. 48:15), “and the five thousand that are left in the breadth, over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.” The whole division was to be profane for the city, &c. In a word, the east side was for the priests, the middle for the Levites next in order, the remaining five thousand was profane for the whole house of Israel to have the city generally, its dwelling and suburbs. And this profane place (it is a simple misstatement to say, that it was what was outside the city, within this portion that was profane)—this profane place which was the part farthest from the sanctuary for the whole house of Israel is, we are told, the heavenly Jerusalem It would be alike impossible and unprofitable to follow all the absurdities and direct contradictions to the text, which arise out of such statements. But there is great evil in them; they catch many that are unstable and unlearned, and lead the mind of any one who attends to them from following undistracted the purposes of scripture itself. But it is painful, really, to dwell upon it. Let no man, however, think that he will be excused from looking daily for the Lord's coming, because other men thus pursue their own errors. The scripture is sent to them and to all.

It appears to me, that much of the crudeness of this pamphlet flows from ignorance of the true nature of the Gentile and Jewish dispensations. The throne of David and the throne of His glory are different things, doubtless; but let us see how this subject is pursued by the writer. “There must be,” says he, “two comings in judgment; one before, one after the millennium: one to sit on the throne of David, the other on the throne of His glory.” But His sitting on the throne of David is not His coming in judgment at all, but the consequence of His judgment of the Gentile nations. But, as proof of the distinction, he refers to the attendants of the Lord “one,” says he, “with His own glory and His saints, the other with the holy angels and His Father's glory.” The passage of scripture in which this is spoken of furnishes no such distinction. He says, coming with His saints in His own glory is the first coming—coming with the angels in His Father's, the second; the first applying to judgment of antemillenarians (see Mark 8:38). I find, “Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Here, this so-called latter coming is expressly applied to those who have not owned Him during His humiliation; and the same observation may apply to

Matt. 16:27. If it be alleged that this is at the raising of the rest of the dead, what shall we say to Luke 9:26? “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the angels.”

And on the other hand, what shall we say, if we compare Jude, where He is said to come with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment on similar offenders? And not only does the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God minister to the raising of the dead in Christ at what this statement would call His first coming, but we are expressly told, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, that, when He comes, according to their views (on which we say nothing), antemillennially, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe, giving rest to those that have suffered with Him in His humiliation, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. It appears to me, that this also flows from ignorance of the plan and scope of scripture, i.e., of the counsels of God in Christ our common Lord. But it proves neglect of scripture. On the whole, a greater confusion of scriptures, and substitution of human conjectures and supposition, can hardly be supposed, than the latter part of the tract.

But our only endeavor must be to obtain tangible portions of it for the purpose of which I write this. The writer proves, from Isa. 65:25, that the curse continues in the land of Israel, because the judgment, it is said, shall rest on the serpent— “dust shall be the serpent's meat.” And as John had said, that there should be no more curse, not speaking of the land of Judea, nor of any place (unless it comprehend all places), but abstractedly and absolutely, but that the throne of God and the Lamb should be in it, in applying this “no more curse” to the city (I do not say erroneously), he says it must apply to the portion of land which is outside the city, and not in it at all, i.e., that part which was for the Prince. For he perceives no impropriety in extending it out of the city. For this “no more curse” means only that there shall be curse still all over the world, except a little portion of land in Judea, which, however, is not within the city, where the curse is not to be. We may remark, too, if Revelation of John be thus applied, the tract contradicts itself; for the throne of God and the Lamb has come upon earth before the third judgment of which he speaks, and the city had the glory of God. And the throne of David and the throne of God are on the earth together; and the whole house of Israel have access to it.

Again, the writer states, “that the Gentiles, which are to have their lot in the land of Israel, are those who are expecting the Lord's personal coming,” &c.; and that he does apply their being changed to giving a long life during the millennium. But he does not apply the coming, on which they are to receive that change, to the first coming—; (i.e. before the millennium, or at least, when they are to be caught up into the air.) That is, in order to satisfy his view of the Gentiles who are to live, in the land of Israel, he thinks that he and his friends are to be the favored persons, but as the Apostle Paul says, that “we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord” are to be caught up; and, as he wishes not to be then ever with the Lord, but to live in Judea or the land of Israel, he settles that this means two comings, and the catching up must belong to the latter, and the change does not mean from corruption to incorruption, but merely from a short life to a long one. “For,” says he, “if not, where else are we to get people to bring the Jews home? Wicked Gentiles would not do it.” In the first place, it appears that the Jews are brought home before the appearing of the Lord; in the next, why not?

Cannot the Lord make any nation minister to the deliverance of His favored people, whatever their own objects and state may be? And such seems to be the very tenor of prophecy—that it shall be an imposed service; and the writer and his friends must leave it to those whom God chooses.

But let us compare Paul's statements. There are two prominent ones—one in 1 Cor. 15, the other in 1 Thess. 4 “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” —(How refreshing is it to turn to Scripture!) The force of this is, I think, too evident to need comment.

We shall all be changed though we all do not sleep— , and we, i.e. who are not asleep, shall be changed. There is a necessary common result to be produced on all, in order to their entrance into the kingdom of God; we shall be changed alike and equally, though we shall not all sleep. We who do not sleep shall yet be changed: . . .

Not to enter further here on this deeply interesting passage, I turn to 1 Thess. 4:13-18— “But I, would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” We, says the apostle, are not to account ourselves better off than those that sleep, as if we and not they should see and meet the Lord.

(Continued from p. 160.)

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry, Prophetic Inquiry, Reflections Upon the: 4

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” &c.; that is, that when Christ shall, come, the dead in Christ shall rise first, i.e. o , first, before we are caught up, and then . In the English there might, perhaps, be an argument on the force of the word “together;” as placed in the Greek as given here, there can be none. The catching up the saints is not spoken of in connection with the destruction of death, as the writer states. The substance of 1 Cor. 15 applies to believers only. There is, therefore, no ground of difficulty from the existence of death during the millennium, as to the application of the above cited passage. And it is remarkable that in the next page, the language of it is put into the mouths of the risen saints, as spoken on the day of the first resurrection, to which in this page the writer says it is wholly inapplicable,

because death remains. In fact, it appears to me a confusion of the Jewish and Gentile dispensations—the hinge upon which the subject and the understanding of scripture turns. Here I complain not of error, but of a neglect of the substantive force of the direct testimonies of the word of God, to meet the views drawn from elsewhere and pursued in the mind beyond the testimony of the place itself; and of consequences being adduced as necessary, according to man's mind, other scripture being made subservient to these, instead of stopping at the direct testimony, till other passages gave additional light, or, at least, connecting deductions by these passages admitted hi their own force. This is alone a great hindrance to knowledge, and practically setting up men's thoughts (ignorant foolish man!) above the word of God.

This book is, indeed, a sample of the evil likely to attend upon what is valuable in these inquiries, from crude thoughts untried by scripture, attached to opinions urged as man, to the credit of the writer, which are now familiar to every body, without any new development of the mind of God in the scriptures, and assuming a title pretending to speak from God, while it speaks only from man, and that crudely, and does not apply the great facts of these revelations to the correction and improvement of men; but instead of that, uses the notions of them to exalt the holders into the only favorites of heaven—thinking every body is scorning them, whereas, in fact, they are becoming worldly through their popularity and self-complacency. It is not the inquiry into these subjects I deprecate; but men's imposing upon others conclusions not drawn, but distracting others, from the scriptural statements of the same truths. I am free to confess that I find the records of God full of consolation, enlarging instruction, holy and sanctifying exhortation, and warning. What God has revealed to man must be the saint's delight to know and must sanctify them more wholly, because it reveals more of the character of God. His revealing it is itself witness of its purpose and (blessed forever be His name!) so has He in the Lord Jesus identified Himself with man, that there is nothing of His acts that He does not reveal by His servants the prophets. Yea, all the things that He does in the Lord He makes a common subject with His people for His sake. Nay, all that He has is now largely opened; even the store-house of His eternal wisdom, and glory, and purpose in the Son is now opened and declared by the revelation of the Spirit, as the scripture, in many places, testifies to our joy and comfort. Who shall shut it up?—Who dares to do it? Rather let us open our mouth wide that. He may fill it. But let no man mix or dissolve the streams of life by strange introductions of human mixture. Truth is the instrument of holiness; and error and weakness, to say no more, of moral conduct will ever be found to attend each other. I say, seek the truth: I say, let not men crudely impose unsound thoughts and distract the church.

One subject yet remains on which I shall shortly touch. In a deeply interesting and, I think, profitable and timely sermon of Mr. Irving's I found the following passage on false accusers. After stating that it meant the spirit of accusation generally, he says, in the “Last Days,” p. 204, “It may therefore be laid down as a general principle of doctrine, that as the law of Christian life is love, so the law of Christian life when love is rejected or maltreated is forbearance, forgiveness, blessing, and intercession with God. As the office of the Christian church on earth, is to preach, and to minister the grace of God unto all men; so also is it her office to make continual intercession before God for those who reject His offered grace, and trample under foot the blood of His covenant. And, of these two functions, the ministry of free grace, and the ministry of intercession for free grace rejected, if I were asked which is the more important, I would answer they are equally important to the integrity of love and the demonstration of divine grace; but of the two, that which is the highest and noblest exercise of love is surely intercession for him who hath spurned our love.”

What shall we say, after this, when we consider their own writings? They have come forward to the bar of public opinion (see “False Accuser,” pp. 208-10), and avowedly descended to fight their accusers on their own ground by public accusation. I feel unwilling entirely to detail here the language and statements of the article on the theology of the periodical Journals. I think Mr. Malan right, and I think Mr. Erskine (though in many respects useful, and that extensively) is entirely wrong, if judged properly by scripture, and wrong for pursuing his own thoughts without just subjection to scripture, conceiving them new, when many, very many, have held them faithfully without mistake. I am not an advocate of the religious world; but neither can I attach myself to those who, in fact becoming an isolated corner of the religions world, and setting up for the best and soundest part of it, fall into at least the same faults which they reprobate in no very courteous terms. They charge the editors of some journal with ignorance of their trade (no very courteous expression: but, while doing this, they should not have misstated the expressions of Erskine, In a way, too, which show them either falsifiers, or else ignorant of the great principles on which their trade (if they will have it so) turned. Mr. Erskine, they say, wishes to state this highly important fact, namely, that by the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, the whole creation (i.e., limiting the word creation to this planet and the beings who inhabit it) is become beneficially interested in the work of Christ. This is certainly a very obscure and unintelligible proposition, and not Erskine's, nor representing his views. This fact, they say, he expressed by saying, “that the world is pardoned by the incarnation of Christ.” But the proposition attributed to Mr. Erskine, whencesoever drawn, is not so expressed by him. He says that “all are pardoned—believers are a little flock.” If he had said the world was pardoned (though I should have thought it an error), properly understood, I could have made an allowance for obscurity of expression: but he says all, i.e., all men, are pardoned; and on this the whole argument of the “Morning Watch” depends. The Reviewer was occupied with his own views, but there is not the slightest ground in Mr. Erskine's book for the position he takes. Righteousness is a scriptural as well as conventical term: I do not recollect that Mr. Erskine ever touches upon this, or uses the word. Scripture does; and this renders his whole view defective, however excellent as an individual.

But the “Morning Watch,” prepossessed with its own views, and willing to have Mr. Erskine as a client or ally, has wholly passed by the whole question raised on his book, and not stated his assertions truly but as partisans, and stands itself on a level with the worse conduct of those it accuses. They themselves shall be witnesses. “The editors,” they say, i.e., of journals opposed to their views, “having refused to debate the subjects like scholars, like gentlemen, or Christians, have chosen their own ground, namely, that of personal claim to public confidence; and into that arena of their own selecting, we must descend after them.” And so indeed they have, and I sorrow for it, for I doubt not that they would much edify the church; but they have to learn that Satan can use their weakness, as well as that of their offending brethren. “And what shall we say then, if the church, forgetful of Christ's office of intercessor, and of her own high vocation to continue the same in the midst of an offending world, should take upon herself the office of accuser, and retaliate the injuries which she receiveth, instead of meekly bearing and being willing to forgive them? What if the church forget, even among themselves, the offices of mutual forbearance and forgiveness, and rage towards one another with even more bitterness and cruelty than those who care for none, of those things? What if the writings the most religious should be the most vindictive, and the society the most religious should be the society most full of judgment and accusation? Then were it not a proof that God's ordinances were changed, that His light was hidden under a bushel, that the salt path lost its savor, and that the name of God was blasphemed amongst the heathen because of His people, and that the last days were come, and that destruction was about to begin at His own house.”

But having closed this part (painfully imposed) of my subject, I turn to the more grateful part—proposing home questions, and making some observations, in the hope that it may lead some to consider topics, which, when calmly and spiritually considered, I am persuaded lead to

sanctification and the edification of those that are gathered. All truth must be so: the simple question is—is this God's revealed truth or not? If it be, it is worse than idle to say it is not calculated to sanctify. In fact, I do not understand the meaning of this. It is a charge against God, the revealer; and comes ill from those who have been combating justly upon opposite grounds the abominable fraud the Roman Catholic priests had perpetrated in keeping away the scripture, the words of God generally. Is it that they are to be the judges of what, and how much, instead of the others?

We would ask them, first, why did God reveal all these things, if they are not fully inquired into? This I admit, that the statements of the same general truths are of different use and application, and the eagerness of those especially interested in prophecy, and the hasty taking up of the subject by many going beyond their measure, has introduced a very unseasonable misuse of prophetic subjects. But I must add the indiscriminate opposition of others has given great occasion to it. Thus the fact that there will be a separation of judgment, between the just and the unjust, is one which concerns man as man, and may be addressed to every soul, and especially to those wholly ignorant of divine things, and the unconverted; while the manner in which the Lord will do it, His peculiar favor and timely interposition for His people—all these, as shown in His dealings, belong to those from whom, as His suffering people, le will not hide the thing that He will do, who share in it by faith as friends of God, strangers with Him, and whose support it is.

(Continued from p. 100.)

Reflections on the Prophetic Inquiry, Prophetic Inquiry, Reflections Upon the: 6

Another subject is the restoration of the Jews to their own land. The calm and judicious W. Lowth, in a day when nothing but the force of scripture influenced him, could not withhold assent from the directness of the testimonies to this. I shall advert merely to some testimonies respecting this point, scattered through all scripture, as it appears to me, and resting on the whole plan of God's dispensed purposes. Zechariah prophesied after the restoration from Babylon. Let the promises in chapter 10 be weighed, in which He declares that He will bring Judah and Ephraim again to place them, and break down the pride of Assyria, &c. This evidently must refer to some period to come, nor can any figurative interpretation of it be given which the language does not repel.

We may remark, also, the special promises in Hosea to Ephraim or Israel as distinct from Judah—promises never yet fulfilled. But let us hear Amos: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I, will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.” It is manifest that nothing can meet this promise but a restoration not yet fulfilled.

So Zeph. 3:14, “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Thee Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear then not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been pat to shame. At that tithe will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you; for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes; saith the Lord.”

Ezek. 34:27, and Isa. 49 are not less strong; but I refrain from commenting on them, as they would lead to general inquiry and interpretation. And my own conviction is, that the return of Judah was but for the accomplishment of the promises relative to our Lord's first coming; and that, in the broad sense, Israel has been in captivity from Babylon until now: this, however, I do not press. Doubt has been started, on this subject, whether Israel was not corporately restored with Judah. The onus probandi evidently rests with those who say it was. But the Lord seems carefully to have secured the negative by the repeated use of Benjamin and Judah, as those specifically who were the restored people. The only ground, which is alleged directly to this point, is Ezra 2:59: “And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel.”

As to Anna the prophetess, and many other passages adverted to, none prove—many go to disprove—the corporate restoration of Israel to their own land. Their individual junction to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin goes as nothing to prove their corporate geographical restoration, but the contrary. If, therefore, there be any promises to this effect, they remain to be fulfilled. In fact, this was nothing more than happened to them in the days of Hezekiah, and related to religions fidelity, not temporal restoration by God; and so throughout. The passages may be found in Prideaux, under the proper date. This, however, is merely a collateral point, though I think a plain one. If there be a direct testimony that Israel shall be planted again in their own land, and never plucked up, it is plain it has never been fulfilled. The more the extended prophecies on this subject are considered, the more it will be found connected with the promises of God in the latter day as regards the blessings of the church, and the circumstances which attend it.

Nor, indeed, is it apparent how the former verses of Deut. 30 can be fulfilled without it, nor without the excision of the Gentiles as a body, which is another inquiry we would make. Is there not a time of the Gentiles which is to be fulfilled, when blindness will depart from Israel? and is there not then in this chapter an explicit promise of their restoration? But is it not expressly stated, as Paul left it in conditional assertion, that the Gentiles would be cut off, when God would plead against all nations? Is not the apostacy of the Gentile profession as plainly stated as possible, and its consequences? Men may say that this applies to Popery; but it is called “the vine of the earth,” a figure well known in scripture, as importing the dispensation of the church generally. And the unclean spirits, who are to gather the kings of the earth, do not gather them against the Lamb by the instrumentality of Popery only, but by the love of power and Atheism. Popery is statedly merely one of those principles which are to be the instruments of bringing men to judgment.

“They answered and said unto him Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” If these things be so, there will be a direct manifestation of Christ, of the judicial power of the Lamb, quite distinct from any of the

present expectations of those who reject the study of prophecy. When John saw heaven opened and beheld a white horse, and He that sat upon him called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war—when he saw the person and glory of the Word of God, it was the revelation of something wholly different from the secret operations of the Spirit of God; and it was something characteristically different from previous providential judgments. There had been hail, and thunder, and lightning, and earthquakes; but this was a manifestation of Him (who had been long hid behind instruments, Who had governed the world as one that suffered apparently His church to grow up and spring he knew not how) because the harvest of the earth was ripe. The ordained government of the earth and the operation of the Spirit of God Was that by which He has ruled the church hitherto; therefore it was a suffering church. Now He was Himself manifested in His power, and therefore the church became triumphant.

No one can read the Revelation without perceiving the intended contrast, so to call it, nor other prophecies without seeing how the whole system of God's dispensations arrange themselves round this great fact. The Son manifested to tread the winepress of wrath is not the Spirit subduing willing souls by the gospel. The operation, everywhere given, of the gospel, is the gathering out of souls before the wrath come, nor is there a testimony, nor the revelation, of the universal spread of the knowledge of the Lord, as far as my recollection serves me, which is not directly accompanied by, or rather conversant about, the judgments of an adverse power, or the declaration of the special blessings to the house of Israel, whose receiving shall be as life from the dead. I would here just shortly refer to Psa. 72; 108 and the consecutive psalms from 91-100. To those who may be interested in the inquiry, Mal. 2:3 may also be consulted, and they may recur again to the prophecy of the stone cut out without hands, and Dan. 7.

There are many passages more fully opening the subject, but perhaps not so strongly leading a previously unconvinced mind as these. It would have been my own delight (oh, how much more so!) to have rather followed, in inquiry, the opening of scripture as to the ways and promises of God as our God. O high and holy place! utterly unworthy we to have it, enjoying the confidence, because the mercy, of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. I mean not of myself, but with the brethren in the Lord. But they have forced upon me the necessity of other inquiries.

In the suggestions I have made to them, I have only put the questions in the broadest terms, on which scripture throws a glare of light, which, as far as I can see, cannot be struggled with, if we pursue our common attainments, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing; if in anything we be differently minded, God will reveal this also unto us. Let, me beseech the brethren to be thus minded. Let me beseech those who yet stand out against these truths to inquire for themselves, to lay them to heart, to submit themselves to the word; not to throw scorn (I pray them to forgive me for thus speaking)—on any part orate testimony of God before they have inquired the purpose of it and their own concern in it. Are they not every way debtors to do this? Let those whose minds are open pursue, with humble desire, inquiry into the Lord's mind. We are surely all interested in knowing that. Let us pursue it as learners in the fear of God, not as speculators; as those who see that God is great in His glory and righteous in His judgments, and one that judgeth the earth and holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hand. The Lord has revealed, much, all that man can comprehend; and it belongs to us and to our children, that we may keep the sayings of His book. There are those, doubtless, who will please themselves, and not seek the church's good; but such shall bear the burden, whoever they be. In many things we all offend. I pray God to give His grace to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. O blessed time, when the church should care one for another, as fellow-sufferers or fellow-heirs, as He did, Who needed none of their sympathy or had but little of it when needed, and Who knew no want, no necessity but the necessity of love. May we be found laboring in this spirit when He shall return! Oh, may His people be perfected in Him, one and all! His grace and the knowledge of His glory be with them in every place. And to Him be praise and dominion and glory according to His Father's will. Amen.

J. N. D.

(Concluded from p. 288.)

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 22:6-21, Notes on

CHAPTER 22: 6-21

Verses 6, 7. Here terminates this description. When the Last Adam shall have exercised His power to re-establish all the things mentioned by the prophets, then shall be the end. He shall be Priest after the order of Melchisedec, Priest seated on His own throne, to praise God and to bless the world. This rebellious world shall then be made subject to Him. This is the form that the mediation will take at that time-not hidden, as it is now, but with His people.

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

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

Verse 16. In the beginning of the Revelation Jesus is set forth as the Root of David. Here He calls Himself the Root and Offspring of David, because He has taken His place of King, as Son of David. Here it is that the church on the earth comes again on the scene, as vessel of the testimony (that is to say, the prophecy is ended). In the prophetic part, the church is not seen unless it be in heaven prophetically. But He,

who has borne the testimony, presents Himself here in Person. This awakens the affections of the spouse, and the church's desire is that He would come.

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

Verse 17. This verse gives the normal position of the church while waiting for Jesus. It is not the bride only who calls for the Bridegroom; it is the Spirit and the bride. This desire of the bride is authorized and sanctioned by the Spirit Himself. It is not anything from the Spirit that one expects. It is the Spirit which desires, and He cannot desire the Spirit. The bride desires, and she desires the Bridegroom and not the Spirit. " Come quickly, Lord Jesus! " If I desire a millennium without Christ, it is not saying " Come quickly," but it is saying Delay at least a thousand years. The church says naturally " Come," if she has apprehended her privileges. There are souls who have not apprehended these privileges of the church; therefore He says, " Let him that heareth say, Come." The church has already the river of life; and so she says to him that is athirst, " let him come," for I have the river of life: " and whosoever will, let him take of the living water freely " (for I have it); let him take of it freely. The church presents grace while waiting for the Bridegroom: it is her duty and her privilege to invite those who are athirst to take of the water of life that she possesses. Having the Holy Ghost, the church invites to drink of this living water. Come and drink! The betrothed of Jesus, she says to the Bridegroom, " Come." How desirable is her position here! As for herself, her affections are fixed above on Christ, whom she is expecting, and whom she desires. Meanwhile she is depositary and witness in grace of the grace she enjoys. She does not say, If any one is Athirst, let him come to me, as Jesus could say; but it is her place, through grace, to say " Come and drink." Nothing urges more to the plainest and most faithful evangelization, than the thought that Jesus is coming quickly. On the other hand, if you are wishing for money, or seeking to make provision for placing your children in the world, or if you have any plans for the future, you cannot wish for the Lord Jesus to come; and if you cannot, then your hearts are not right with Jesus. For Christians, it is a melancholy state. And if any one does not own the Lord, nothing is more awful than the coming of Jesus: it is judgment for such a one. May God purify our hearts, in order that we may desire that Jesus would come quickly! Amen.

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 2, Revelation 21:9-27 and 22:1-5, Notes on

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

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

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

Verses 9-13. It is in heaven, in the glory only, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is spoken of in the accomplishment of

God's ways concerning her. The present dispensation is only the assembling the living stones of this city, the assembling of the saints, the church. Through the resurrection, we shall all be placed without sound (see 1 Kings 6:7) in the glory prepared for us. This is the bride of the Lamb, not of the King, as in the Old Testament. The church has part in the sufferings, as well as in the glory of Christ; and to her Jesus is the Lamb, and not the King; the manifestation of the heavenly, and not of the earthly, righteousness of God (for in the last case Christ ought not to have died). This heavenly righteousness is hidden in God, unknown to the world, but known of faith. Before the world, the death of Christ is the greatest injustice of man. The Lamb is also the manifestation of the patience and of the goodness of God. But, as to the accomplishment of righteousness with regard to His death, no true estimate could be made of its value, except in heaven. No reward on earth could have been worthy of what Jesus has suffered. The manner in which Jesus glorified the Father could not be worthily recompensed but in placing the Son at the right hand of the Father. To suffer for having done well, and to submit to all-this is the part of a Christian. It is better to keep Christ's character than one's cloak. The church has part in all this. She has the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ and of His resurrection. She becomes the Lamb's wife in His glory, as in His rejection: she has part in His sufferings. We cannot have a portion with Christ above without having it with Him here on earth. Christ is one whole.

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

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

There is still something more-" the glory of God." Then the city has the form and the beauty of what God manifests in the glory. God is glorified there: all shines with His glory; all relates to it, bears witness to it, and is clothed with it. " We rejoice in hope of the glory of God," Rom. 5:2. Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints, and the church is clothed with the glory of God Himself. It is precious to have always God's true object in view, which cannot stop on this side His glory. If one would get at the bottom of the counsels of God, one must look to His glory. What makes me, in traveling, pass through such and such a place, is not the desire of seeing that place, but of getting to an end beyond. The sight of the glory sanctifies truly, and gives an object far above all that could be prepared to stop us here on earth. We shall never walk well here below, even in the smallest details, if the great end is not constantly before our eyes. If I have any object on this side the glory, even the welfare of the church in detail, my soul will suffer from it. In this consists that which elevates all the Christian does-if in everything he has the glory of God in view.

The Father, we have seen, is never mentioned in the Revelation; nor have we here the children of the Father, but the bride of the Lamb. This book speaks of government and glory; and God, in this book, takes all His titles save that of Father. The apostles of the Lamb (v. 14), not the twelve tribes of Israel, are the foundations of the city. The prophets knew that these things were not for themselves, but for us; 1 Peter 1:12.

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

Verse 18. God's glory is the building of the wall; this jasper represents God. Christ is girded with pure gold, and it is said, " Righteousness is the girdle of his loins." It is the divine righteousness accomplished in Jesus, not the earthly. Verse 21. There is also purity, transparent glass, the perfect purity of God, which can no longer be defiled; chap. 15: 2. The purity is no more of water, but of glass; it is consolidated, and rendered firm. The church, one with Christ, is seen there, having the righteousness of God, His purity, His holiness. The justice of man does not become a Christian. One cannot mix together with grace the earthly justice, which says " Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." The righteousness of heaven can ally itself with grace, and the only righteousness that becomes a Christian is a heavenly righteousness. It gives, and no longer exacts. God having communicated His nature to the Christian, he is raised above sin, and is made partaker of God's holiness; 2 Peter 1; Heb. 12. The true character of the Christian is that of divine righteousness and holiness, and that of grace-what becomes God, when He is manifested as man. We want faith to lose our fortune and to forgive; but if it is coming out of the society of man, it is entering into that of God. What a portion for us, and how it does elevate our souls! This righteousness, this holiness of God, cannot be fully manifested until the church is seen in glory.

The difference of the stones (v. 19, 2o) contains details which are above my knowledge. It is said of Satan, that before his fall he walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire-that every precious stone was his covering; Ezek. 28:14. The precious stones were on the breastplate of the high priest. These stones are not pure light, but the reflection of the divine glory, where the most elevated creature walked before its fall. It is in that position that Christ places the church on His heart, as high priest, and in the full manifestation of which He places her in the glory. The church is in that glory. It is what is nearest to God when the question is about the glory. It is the radiancy of divine glory reflected, and manifested in its varied beauty in the creature, and this in its most immediate relationship with God, a radiancy of divine light on and through the creature. In Ezekiel, this is the case in creation; on the breastplate of Jesus, in grace; here, in glory. In the first case the creature could not maintain itself there. Christ maintains the church there in its weakness. He places her there in the strength He has Himself in the glory. The point here is the right of the sovereignty of God, who places the church in this glory; and not the affection of the Father to His children.

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

Verses 22-27. There is no more temple-that is to say, nothing that contains and hides the glory of God. God is the temple. He receives and encloses His people. If one came out of the temple, one found the world. Then we shall be shut up in God. He is the intimate center of everything, as also the circumference of our happiness. If we would come out of purity, we must come out of God, who is infinite. All God's names in this dispensation, save that of Father, are here. The Lamb, He who has suffered, and in whom our affections are concentrated, is also the temple. God shall be the Sun of the city (v. 23) and we shall know as we have been known. This has consequences. The nations upon the earth, spread in the judgment, walk in its light, the light of the city. Jesus saith, " The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me," John 17:22-26. There will be a world which shall know it and see it, in the manifestation of that glory. The affection of the bride delights in the glory that belongs to the Lamb, and the bride is manifested in that glory.

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

Isa. 60 shows that the earthly Jerusalem has the earthly government and the rights of the justice of God. " The nation that will not serve her shall perish," v. 12. As to the heavenly Jerusalem, the nations of those who arc saved shall walk in her light. All that God shall perfect in the glory ought to be manifested through the Holy Ghost here on earth. By anticipation the Holy Ghost gives us the foretaste of this glory. And the knowledge of that glory is a principle of action which the world can never understand; but it can see the fruits of it. The selfishness of the world understands the grace that is in the Christian, which can forgive; but, in principle, that grace is foolishness to him. Yet, although the world does not understand our motives, it sees the faithfulness, which is a testimony rendered to grace. May God be sanctified in us by the

sight of that glory!

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

The earthly Jerusalem has almost all the characters of the celestial one. Yet there is an essential difference. It is in the heavenly Jerusalem that the glory is, and it is from thence that it shines upon the earthly Jerusalem. Our Christian discipline here in the earth enables us to manifest this glory. The earthly Jerusalem is upon the earth, the seat of the government of God in justice. The glory requires that all the nations should be brought low; Zech. 1:21; 2:8-13; 8:22, 23, etc. Under Israel we see the patience of God in government, with the incapacity of Israel to profit by it. Under the government of the New Jerusalem the law will be put in their heart (Ezek. 36:27), and will enable them to answer to this government of God, and God will manifest His glory there, " and my people shall be all righteous."

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

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

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

Life is represented here under two figures: (1) A river of living water. We have not only the life in us, but we are drinking forever of that life which proceeds from the throne of God, and flows in abundance through the city. (2) A tree of life. One might have eaten in Eden of the tree of life, but in that tree there was no principle of healing. Here this is not the case. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the Gentiles. This tree of life is more blessed. Those that are in the city find food in its fruit, and from its leaves proceed the resources of life for those who are still on the earth. There is the joy of communion. We drink of the river of living water. Although this is the highest joy, yet it is a joy also, even for God, to do good to those who are in want. It is grace, it is goodness. We are made partakers of that joy in the holy city; we shall enjoy there the grace which heals, as well as the grace of drinking in His holiness. There is joy in heaven for one sinner that repents.

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

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

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 22:16-17, Fragment on

The Morning Star is the place Christ has taken so as to have the church with Him in that character. Christ is the subject of prophecy as regards the earth, and then disappearing and going up: never the subject of prophecy as hid in God.

Chapter 1: 5. Earthly association with Him is spoken of first. The church has her own proper place, and says, " To him who loveth us, and hath washed," etc., and then turns round to speak of His manifestation on earth. His earthly work for me was when He washed me from my sins. He is not only the " Faithful Witness " for me, but the faithful worker. In every sense He was a faithful witness for God. But we begin not with that, but, " He loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood "; we look back, too, and see He has all the rest. He has put us in the same official nearness with Himself to God-" king and priests, unto God and his Father."

In chapter 4 we see the church now in heaven. The judgment of the churches down here in chapters 2 and 3; judgment of the world afterward; and then, at the close, a description of the heavenly city: " Behold, I come quickly," etc. All is closed: just as revealed at the beginning, so it is at the close. " I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches "-a personal word after the book is closed. The beginning of the book opened also with what He was.

Chapter 22: 16, being in contrast with what had been said for the world, draws out the expression from the saints of verse 17; this shows our position till He comes. "The Root and the Offspring of David " is the Source of all, and the Heir of all-the holder, or vessel, in which all the blessing is set. This does not draw out the peculiar feelings of the church; but when He says, " I am the Bright and Morning Star," it calls out the expression from the church, showing her secret or private knowledge of His own personal value. In rejection while in the world, Christ was keeping up connection with it. Death comes in: the witness closed. Then redemption's history begins-" Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die," etc. Moreover, when He is manifested to earth, we shall be manifested with Him. The Bright and Morning Star stands contrasted with the blessing the earth will get. Then comes the invitation of the Spirit and the church; it is Himself she wants, and, until then, she is the full vessel of the grace of God, and says, " Come." Israel is not that. They do not know relationship and deliverance in consequence of that, but they wait for deliverance out of the sorrow-" out of the depths." They groan for deliverance, that is, the coming in of power to set them free.

The hope of the church is by the power of the relationship. She is the bride, she has the Spirit, and does not wait for it. Israel says, " Thou to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself." Does the bride say that? Does she call for vengeance? No; she is waiting for the Bridegroom. It was that which closed the relationship with the world, that began our relationship with Christ. His death was the ending of that in which God could have anything to say to man as man. As connected with Him in manifestation (not union-never that), all closed at His death. I can say, I am dead, crucified with Christ, my life is hid with Christ in God. The center and root, too, of all our relationship to God is Christ's death. Sins are gone, not existing any more: the being is gone in which they were, that is, I. We begin by death, and we are never clear unless we see that. It is not by His death I am put into union with Him, but by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. They would not hear, killed Stephen, and the like; and then comes out this position-exclusively a heavenly Christ; and then we get the Morning Star. He is not only a Christ in heaven, but He has associated believers with Him while He does not come to the earth: His blood-shedding is the ground of it all. The revelation to Paul after this is " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Paul got the teaching of the church, and said afterward, " I know no man after the flesh "-I know no such people as Israel on the earth-no such Head as the Messiah. My connection is with Christ risen and glorified on high. In John 14 He says, " I go to prepare a place for you." He does not say, I will prepare a place for Israel. We are going to the Father's house. We are connected with the Father and the Son by faith while waiting for Him, and we shall be with the Father and the Son by-and-by. Christ, the hope of the glory to be revealed, is the foundation of that, and therefore it is said, " Christ in you, the hope of glory." How can we tell that? We know it, for He " shall be in you." The Holy Ghost is an unseen Spirit in the world, but He is linking you with an unseen Savior in heaven. This is our proper hope, as being of the bride through the Holy Ghost dwelling in her.

What is the Morning Star? The revelation of Christ to the church when He is not seen by the world-the completion of present privilege. In 2 Peter 1:19 Christ is the " day star." The allusion in this passage is to the transfiguration, recorded in the three Gospels. The kingdom is the earthly glory spoken of. The heavenly thing is the hidden part. " They feared as they entered the cloud." It was not a common cloud, but significant of the presence of God-the Shekinah, where God dwelt in connection with Israel. They did not see from without what was WITHIN. The Shekinah frightened those in the wilderness. Moses and Elias went into the cloud: the others did not see them then. The word of prophecy is confirmed by the glory revealed-a candle that shineth in a dark place. The Father was in the cloud. Moses and Elias went in, and the others could not see in. Paul only knew afterward what was within.

There is to be something besides broad day. This is the night; but the Morning Star is to be seen by those watching through the night. Prophecy tells you of the day, but not of this Star. Prophecy could not tell you of the hidden Christ, " until the day dawn." Those who are waiting for the day see the dawn, and watch for the day. They do not belong to the earth (as in darkness of night), because the spared remnant on the earth are that; but they belong to heaven as well as to the power of the day before the day comes. We get Christ Himself as He will never be seen in the day. Hence in Rev. 2:28 the address to Thyatira says, " I will give him "the overcomer, not only the glory of the kingdom, as revealed to Peter, but that within the cloud not revealed to him-" the Morning Star." Here the bride responds to Him-the Morning Star. Now I shall have my proper place. He has washed me from my sins long ago. The relationship is understood, and enjoyed-no need of explaining it. Did you ever hear a person explaining to a child what its mother is? The relationship is there. There is no explanation when He says, " I am the Bright and Morning Star." Those who have got hold of the relationship say directly " Come." They know Him as the One who has loved them, and washed them from their sins, etc., and they are within the veil. The Spirit leads the chant, " Come." The church has the consciousness in herself of the relationship, and the coming of Christ to receive the church could not be a matter of indifference; it could not be understood by a person who has not the living relationship. If I have the relationship, and He knocks, do I want an explanation of who He is before I open the door? Does the wife wait before she opens to her husband, when she knows his knock? " The Spirit and the bride say, " Come." Are all Christians saying, Come? No! Then what is to be done? The church is corrupt: there is the great house. But there are individual hearers; let them say, " Come." The first desire is to have Christ, and to Him she says, " Come "; the next, that all who hear should have right affections towards Christ, and say, " Come." You that hear, do you join, and say, " Come."

You get the whole circle of right affections in this verse: first, that arising from the consciousness of being the bride; secondly, desire for all the saints. Why are you lingering outside Christ? Are you waiting for judgments on the earth? There is a desire that the saints should have no hindrance to the single eye, and readiness to say, " Come," knowing the heart is not right if not saying, " Come." Then is that all? No; there is a third thing-the gracious perception, that there are thirsty souls wanting to be refreshed. She says to them, ' I have the Spirit, I have been refreshed.' The church does not say, ' Come to me '-the false church says that-but says, " Come." I have not got the pure flowing of the river yet (Rev. 22), but you come. The next thing to the supply of our own need is the discernment of the wants of these thirsty ones. We can say, I have part in the Bridegroom-I have rivers of living water. We ought to be able to say, I have got the river. Anyone can say, There are rivers; but we ought to be able to say, We have them. If our hearts are in the circle of these affections, we shall say to others, Come, and have them too. Is that all? No; there are yet others invited: " Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Thus the church is seen, first, in its full bridal place and desire for Christ's coming without a question of judgment; and so in the individual that hears His voice; then follow the invitations of grace.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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

LECTURE 4

I alluded in a few words the last evening to the church of Thyatira on account of the connection of Balaam and Jezebel: Balaam being a prophet acting among the saints to seduce them; and Jezebel, a prophetess, established within, being a farther advance in evil-not merely a seducer, as Balaam, but a mother of children there, as Jezebel, having children of this corruption.

And now we get (in this part of the chapter) into what we may call new ground. Two things mark this. The Spirit of God, who rises far above all our failure, directs the eye of the faithful remnant to the coming of the Lord Jesus. And the expression, " he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," is no longer in connection with the address to the church in general, but after the promises to them that " overcome." And this marks out the remnant as separate from the body in general. The position of the remnant is specially marked out as being no longer in connection with the general body of the church, but with the place in which those stand to whom the promise is sent, as " to him that overcometh." In the address to this church, and to the three following churches, the exhortation to hear is placed after the special promise.

The distinguishing element which we found brought into the last church (Pergamos) is, that the world is the place of Satan's throne. Therefore the church must be in either of these two positions-a persecuted suffering church in the world because of faithfulness, or lose that character and be brought to acquiesce and go on in the world.

We saw in Ephesus decline marking its state-" thou hast left thy first love." In Smyrna, persecution comes in, " the devil shall cast some of you into prison," thus brightening them up for God. And afterward, in Pergamos, corrupting instructions go on within; and all these, not with respect to individual failure, but to the corporate state of the church, it being that which was characterizing the church at certain periods of time in this dispensation. In the address to Pergamos, we find the seductive teaching going on to corrupt what was within, but not as yet established and settled within, so that what characterized the within should be productive of evil. The motherhood of evil was now in the church.

Salaam the false prophet was seducing, and joining the church to the world. " Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam "; and to the " overcomer," the individual promise and blessing of the hidden manna and the white stone are given. But now there is something farther-" thou sufferest that woman Jezebel." Here the evil was allowed. We saw that, when Balaam failed in getting God to curse Israel, he then tried to bring them into trouble through association in evil with the people of the adversary. This has now succeeded in the professing church.

In Thyatira, therefore, we have a still more terrible state of things than in Pergamos. There was not only the evil teaching -those who " hold the doctrine of Balaam," but a person established within, having children of this seduction; not merely seducing God's children into it, but Jezebel was, so to speak, so much at home there, that children were born, finding their home and birthplace in the evil, yea, springing from the very corruption itself. But then mark that, in this increased evil and wickedness, we find also increased energy on the part of the faithful ones; for God had a remnant in the midst of the evil, whose faithfulness shone out the brighter by reason of the dense darkness around. We see this exemplified in Israel's history. In the midst of idolatry, worshipping the golden calf, or under a persecuting Jezebel, men of power, like Elijah and Elisha, were raised up in a special power of testimony for God, thus manifesting that God was and is ever sufficient for His people's need.

When evil is at such a height as to make it impossible for the faithful ones to go along with it, then they get into a more advanced state of knowledge and power in separation from it (although it may be one of much more trial) than they had when the church was in a more prosperous condition. In the times of Elijah God preserved His name in a most special way. The whole nation of Israel had got so dreadfully bad, that God would be obliged to cut them off; but the time had not yet come. But in the time of Elijah they had nothing rightly in order; there was neither temple, nor sacrifice, nor priesthood at Mount Carmel; nevertheless God was there for the faithful few, in a way that the people at Jerusalem had not the knowledge and enjoyment of; for the mighty power of God was there to give testimony to the word of His prophet. And so again with Moses, he went on faithfully with the Lord while Israel was failing all around him. It was not when Israel was going on well that Moses was the nearest to God, but when they had all gone wrong. When the golden calf was made, then " Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp "; and then he went to meet with God, and there " the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." And we find God referring to this in Num. 12 as gloriously distinguishing Moses. When Aaron and Miriam spake against Moses, and not on Moses's going up to God on Mount Sinai, God says, " Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses, who is faithful in all mine house? With him will I speak mouth to mouth."

When Moses met God in the tabernacle outside the camp, he was more excellent, so to speak, than when God called him to the top of Mount Sinai. Indeed, we find it a constant principle in Scripture that, where there is most manifest and universal failure, there God brings out in His faithful ones far greater testimony and power than had been known in the body as a whole, thus showing, as Jethro says, " In the thing wherein they dealt proudly [by their sin and rebellion against God] God was above them " in grace and power. It was so in the time of the Lord Jesus, who was a most blessed and glorious example of this principle; being the Lord Himself, who brought out the fullest and most blessed testimony of grace and righteousness to bear upon the ways of the world, and of His own people, at the moment of Israel's and the world's darkest and deepest sin of crucifying God's Son. For at the very time that Israel's heart was made fat-when they were in a condition to receive seven other spirits more wicked than him that had of old possessed them, ready to merge into that last state which was worse than the first, then God, who had before spoken to them in divers manners by sacrifice and type and prophets, spoke to them by His Son, in the Person of the meek and lowly Jesus.

This is the case when Jezebel is come in here at Thyatira. " I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first." The effect of the condition of the professing church was to drive saints into a kind of energy they had not before known. So indeed has it ever been in the history of the church in what has been called " the dark ages." We find the most faithful testimony, such a measure of devotedness (which I am sure I should be glad to see now in any way) unknown at other times, men hazarding their lives to witness for God; but how little of this in our day of ease and slothfulness!

" I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and works, and the last to be more than the first." Here we get the love and the faith working, which were wanting in Ephesus; and now the Lord says, I will encourage them with " hope," so that we get faith, hope, and charity, the three great principles of Christianity. Although not produced in their own happy order, as in Thessalonians, still they are all here in a way. And mark how quick-sighted God always is, to take notice of the good things, and that before He speaks of the evil things.

We get this character of judgment in Christ here. " These things saith the Son of God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass." Fire is a symbol of unfailing judgment; this penetrated everywhere, as the eye of God. But what does He first see? He sees at once, no doubt, through this terrible evil; but He notices first what delights His heart in these poor saints that nobody cared anything about. He sees that which is delightsome to Himself in the despised few; and while His feet, like unto fine brass, mark the unchangeable character of that righteousness which God (in His spiritual dealings with and claims upon man) manifests down here, and which sustains His pure and infallible judgment. Hence the altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle was of brass, and which in man was divinely accomplished in Christ, and characterized His Person; yet the eye of God rests upon the very least spark of faithfulness in the midst of evil. There is not one throb of the heart that beats true to Himself, in the midst of abounding iniquity, that passes unheeded by him; and this is what sustains the heart in the midst of untoward circumstances. And happy it is for us to know (in the simplicity of faith) and realize in power in our souls, the full meaning of those two little words, " I know," thus walking in the happy consciousness that the eye of God is upon our walk and ways.

Verse 20. " I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel," etc. Now the church, taken as a whole, is characterized by suffering the evil; it is not now as before, " thou canst not bear them that are evil "; there was now the full public allowance of this spirit of evil which was in the church. This was going much farther down the scale than merely having the evil teaching among them: thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants." They suffered a woman, having a professed character in the church, " who calleth herself a prophetess "-a false one surely, yet one who professed to hold and teach the word of God in the church. " I gave her space to repent, and she repented not." Thus we see God does not all at once deal in judgment with her, but gives her time for repentance; He has patience with her, but she does not repent. He was not dealing with the heathen here: to them He preaches the gospel, that their souls may be won to Christ. But here was one who called herself a prophetess in the church, teaching God's servants to " commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols," and God deals with her on this ground of her profession. He " gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not ": therefore He must execute judgment.

And mark, that there is no mention made here of a candlestick. He gave her space to repent; but it is not said here, " I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent "-for Jezebel is not indeed acknowledged as a candlestick. There are two characters of judgment, for they were not all the children of Jezebel. To commit adultery is a common figure in Scripture for tampering with evil, particularly idolatrous evil, because it was God's people giving themselves to others than Him. First, " Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." Secondly, " And I will kill her children with death." There are those that are not her children, but people who have to say to her, who are content to associate and have fellowship with the evil. Them I will punish, they shall eat the fruit of their ways: " and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." I will see who are content to float down the stream with the evil, or who make a stand in faithfulness to me. Them that have committed adultery with her, that have tampered with this spirit of false prophecy, " I will cast into great tribulation, except they repent "; but those who are her children, who have got their Christian place and name in virtue of this false doctrine, they shall have full judgment, " I will kill her children with death." It is not merely tribulation for them, for they are objects of full and complete judgment: time having been given them for repentance, those that are born of her shall be visited with immediate judgment, " I will kill them with death."

How sad it is, how very sad, to see Christians, as we often do, tampering with such evil. Take, for instance, the Galatians: there were saints there who were tampering with Judaism, who wanted to bring in the law; it is not that they were not Christians, but they were mixed up with that which was utterly hateful to God. Paul, therefore, says to them, " I stand in doubt of you," though afterward his faith links them with their risen Head, and in virtue of Christ's unfailing grace, aid their completeness in Him, he says, " I have confidence in you through the Lord." It requires great watchfulness, for the soul is ever in danger of being mixed up with principles which God utterly hates. In Colossians they were not holding the head; they were putting something between the head and the members. The apostle Paul is in an agony when he sees anything coming in to separate the saint from his immediate, proper, and personal connection with Christ. If it be a true Christian that is thus tampering with evil, he must be put into tribulation to be brightened up for God; and if he be not converted, then there is nothing before him but judgment. So all who in the public Christian world of the day tamper with the corruption of Christianity, represented by Jezebel in Thyatira, will be cast into desperate distress, if they repent not of their deeds. It is a very solemn thought, but a true one, that God having taught the saints that they are one with Christ, he who puts anything whatever between them and the Head, virtually denies Christianity. It was the great truth given to the apostle Paul to unfold; it was what he received specially from the Lord: " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Therefore it was that it puts Paul's mind into an agony, whatever it might be, whether works of the law, priesthood, or anything else, which, coming in between the soul and Christ, denied the great truth he had learned, the very truth that he was converted to, that the church was one with Christ, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

This blessed truth, held in the simplicity of faith, gives power to the soul, and sweeps everything else away; and it also sweeps through the whole course of the Christian's daily life, if he has anything between his soul and Christ. If I were a Jew I should want something on the earth, and some one between me and the God whom I obscurely know; but I am a Christian, and therefore all I want is in heaven. But again, if I am a Christian, I am united to Christ, I am one with Him; if therefore united to Him, one with Him, nothing whatever can come between us, so that in attempting to bring in anything between us, it is actually setting aside Christianity altogether. Many Christians would be dreadfully frightened did they know how many things they are putting between themselves and Christ, thus virtually denying their oneness with Christ in heaven. If you would bring a priest on earth between me and God, any other than Christ in heaven, you at once destroy my privilege, for if Christ be a priest and I am one with Him, I must be a priest also; but is this priesthood carried on on the earth? No; the place of His priesthood is in heaven. An earthly priesthood doubly denies Christianity. It makes the system and standing earthly, and it denies our association with Christ. If I were a Jew I should go to an earthly temple, and rightly so; but being a Christian, when I go to God, it must be in heaven. Being one with Christ, I can have no place of worship on the earth, though my b)dy may be there. Christ Himself being cast out of it, I am in heaven, and if I am to use any priest on the earth, I must leave heaven to come down here to use it there. The priesthood is exercised in the place to which it belongs. An earthly priesthood was suitable where God was between the cherubim behind the veil on earth. A heavenly one has its place of exercise in heaven. Yes, dear friends, if our souls are washed in Christ's blood, everything we can possibly want is in heaven. " Our life is hid with Christ in God "; and then, necessarily, such " a High Priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made

higher than the heavens." The good Lord only give His own blessed truth more power in our souls, and then all the questionings of earthly priesthood, ordinances, and the like, would soon vanish. I must have a true priest in heaven or not have a true Christ for my soul.

Now mark the character God takes: " I am he that searcheth the hearts and the reins." You shall not escape me; and however plausible the evil may be, and however you may put the name of the Lord upon it (as Israel put Jehovah's to the golden calf when they said, " These be thy gods, O Israel... tomorrow is a feast to Jehovah," Ex. 32:4, 5), still it will meet with full judgment, because you have put my saints lower than I have put them in Christ, and have idolatrously corrupted the truth of God.

Verse 24. From this verse and onward the Lord is taking up the faithful remnant, and therefore we find Him taking another way of dealing. " But unto you I say [and to], the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine [in committing fornication, and eating things sacrificed unto idols], and which have not known the depths of Satan, I will put upon you none other burden." This abstaining from the evil, though very blessed, still is not the soul growing up from strength to strength into its full portion in Christ; " but that which ye have hold fast." I am going to " kill her children with death, but that which ye have hold fast till I come." This is what He now directs their faith, the eye of their souls, to-His coming. He does not expect them to get back to the point from whence the church departed, but directs them onward to His coming. I am going to execute judgment. " I will kill her children with death." Therefore you must not expect Jezebel to get right, or to be in the condition of a candlestick. No, your eye must rest upon another thing; and here comes in the hope. Still it is not presented in the form of the bright and blessed hope they got at the first, like the Thessalonians, where they " turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." It now has a different character, being presented as a refuge to the faithful, because " in the place where righteousness should have been, behold iniquity was there." This is the comfort held out in the midst of the wreck of everything, " till I come." The Lord does own the " works, and charity, and service, and faith, and patience," that do exist. You have only got this little now, ' but that which ye have hold fast till I come." It is one thing to have the coming of the Lord presented as a relief to a faithful few, in the midst of the evil and corruptions of the Jezebel state of the church, and another and very different thing to have it as the bright and blessed hope of the church to sustain it and to lift it out of the corruptions of the world. But it is not merely the fact of His coming: the brightness of Himself who comes can alone satisfy the heart's desire.

Verse 26-28. Now He opens out the consequences of His coming to the nations and to the church. " To him will I give power over the nations." This is a remarkable expression, and we do not find any such when the church was in full prosperity. But now, when the professing church has got into the position of being the greatest possible trial to the saints, and its association with the world has made that which bears its name the mother of children of corruption, the faithful ones in the midst of it all have special promises on which to stay their souls. We know from history, how in the darkest times men of faith have had to wend their way through evil in the church, and fearing detection by those who called themselves by that name, and under bitter persecution from the ruling power in the earth. The nominal church being really Satan's power by corruption exercised through the nations. And so it is here; the saints, having faith and patience, go on persevering through every difficulty, if it be Jezebel and her children with the name of the church on the one side, and persecution of the nations on the other. The promise is association with Jesus Himself, the bright and morning star; and where there has been faith in this, there shall be power over the nations. The world that, under Satan's power, has been the trial of saints, shall be subjected to them. " He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end [in the midst of that corruption which has still the name and responsibility of a church], to him will I give power over the nations." (In Matt. 24 we get the same thing as to principle, though not as applying to the same point of time: " He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.") " And I will give him the morning star." Thus He is giving to the faithful remnant, while in this condition, the special consciousness of union with Himself. The difficulty of the position in which they found themselves was, that all around them were turning to Jezebel and her corruption, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. And then they cry, " What am I to do? " to which the Lord replies, " Follow me-keep my works unto the end," and then you shall have my portion at the end, " even as I received of my Father."

We see here, in the promise made to the faithful, two characters of the coming of the Lord pointed out. The first regards their position as to the world-it is as " power over the nations "; then, secondly, their own proper blessing, the morning star. With regard to the first, there is a reference to it in Psa. 2:9. The church of the living God in its walk on this earth ought to have judged the world; but now, having committed fornication with the world, it has no power to judge it: therefore the Lord says, " I must "; for the church, having failed in the holiness and separateness of its walk to condemn the world, the Lord must give testimony to what the world is in judgment. (See Psa. 2) If the persecuted ones bowed to the authority of the world, as ordained of God, still morally they were separated from it.. And from the corruption of Jezebel they stood wholly aloof with horror, let Jezebel's influence be what it might. They were honored by being martyred. The powers of the world at the close will be associated against God's anointed, but in spite of all He will take His power over the nations. And what is the church's place and portion there? Christ is now sitting on the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost is come down to gather the church; and after the saints are taken to the Lord, then He will come forth and judge the world.

" Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion "- " I will declare the decree "-" Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Son is not used here in the character of eternal Son of the Father, but, as born in the world, the man set up in glory to rule over the earth. " Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Christ is not doing this now; He is not now praying for the world. The moment He asks God in respect of it, judgment on the world must ensue. " Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." In John 17 Christ says, " I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." He leaves it out of His requests. He is not now breaking the nations in pieces, but is sending forth His blessed gospel to gather souls out of the world; and the Holy Ghost is sent down to join them to Himself, thus forming the church. But when He asks for the nations, it will be to dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be the judgment of the living. And hence the word of warning at the close of Psa. 2, " Be wise now therefore, 0 ye kings," etc. " Kiss the Son, lest he be angry "; for if you do not bow to this summons, thus giving you in patience, opportunity to repent, you must bow to the wrath of the Lamb. " To me every knee shall bow."

And mark here what the church's portion is as one with Christ: " To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations," etc., as I have received of my Father. And of Christ it is said, " He shall rule them with a rod of iron." The world must be set right and He will execute judgment upon it, and when He comes to do it, the church will be associated with Him in it; but now she is dwelling where Satan's seat is, with evil on every side, and cannot touch it by way of setting it right. And, therefore, it is, as if Christ should say to His faithful remnant, " Do not you be afraid, do not you be uneasy on account of persecutions, nor yet about the corruptions of Jezebel: only ' keep my works unto the end.' " This is the time of patience and lowly faithfulness. Do you walk through the world as I walked through Israel, " and I will give you power over the nations," " even as I have received of My Father." The power shall be yours when I take Mine and reign. This is the special character of association with Christ in power.

But meanwhile what are we to do as regards setting the world right? Nothing, and this the flesh cannot understand. We are not to meddle with the raging of the heathen, nor yet to concern ourselves with the alliances of nations (while still remembering that we have to submit to the powers that be, as ordained of God, and obey them), nor yet to defile ourselves by touching the evils of Jezebel, but to wait on God. " Keep my works unto the end " and wait patiently; for when Christ shall have the upper hand, so shall we. Our interests are His and His are ours; they are so enwrapped together that they cannot be sundered. The force of that expression in Colossians: " If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances? "-is just this: He is hid in God and so am I (that is the reasoning); His life is ours. " Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." He so refers our state to His, that, if He is hid in God, we are hidden too. And if His appearing is spoken of, " when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory." Thus, being entirely one with Christ while He is waiting on the Father's throne, we are called to wait with Him in spirit down here.

I might notice by the way, that in Psalm Ito there may be some explanation of the expression, " of that day knoweth no man, neither the Son." The Son is sitting at the right hand of God and is looked at prophetically as waiting there, as Jehovah said unto Him, " Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Therefore, in this sense the Son-as prophetic minister of revealed truth, and as such He spoke in Israel (see Heb. 1)-may be said not to know the day nor the hour; for, as Paul says, in Heb. 10, He is " from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool," when they will be made ours also. Wherefore in the address to Philadelphia, we are called upon to keep the word of His patience, and if He is waiting, it is no wonder that we have to wait also; and it is Himself that is the very best part of what we wait for.

This is the proper and peculiar portion of the church- association with Him; the other, that is the power over the nations, is merely the fruit and consequence of it. He must judge, but to you He is the " morning star." Judgment is His " strange work." He is slow to wrath, but He must execute judgment, because He cannot allow iniquity to go on forever; for He is going to take possession of His own throne, and He cannot have a throne in connection with Satan and his evil, and therefore He must put the evil down, for He cannot allow it; so that antichristian power in the world must be cast down, as He cannot set up His own throne and let that exist. As it is said in Psa. 94:20, " Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? " It could not be. Therefore He must do His strange work: but His proper work, so to speak, is to shine in His own heavenly brightness- our proper place to be associated with Him there.

" I will give him the morning star." And who is it that sees the morning star? He who watches while it is night. All see the sun in its brightness; but those only who are not of the night, yet knowing that morally it is night and are looking for the morning star-those, and those only, see the morning star and get it as their portion. They are children, not of the night, but of the day; and, therefore, look they for the day. When the star rose that hailed Jesus, who was born King of the Jews, there were Annas and Simeons waiting for the consolation of Israel. And who were Anna's friends in that day of darkness? Simply those who were looking for redemption in Israel, and to them she spake of Him. In them was made good that word in Malachi-" They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." We see they knew each other, and they enjoyed the comfort in spirit by. the truth of Jesus of what follows in the prophet: " To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." These were a poor despised few who were but little known and less cared for; but they were " waiting " for redemption in Israel, sensible of the ruin and of the evil, because alive to God's glory and to the privilege of being His people. In them, feeble as they were, we find a much brighter mark of faith than we do in Elijah when he was calling down fire from heaven. They were not setting the temple right, but were speaking together of God's thoughts. Elijah was setting outward things to rights, but had not faith for inside things.1 In God's unfailing grace to the remnant he had no just confidence. Law was the measure of his apprehension; but the Annas and Simeons had the secret of God in their souls (" the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant "), and were walking in the narrow and silent path of faith, not setting the temple right, but speaking to all that were waiting for consolation in Israel. But were they content with the state of things? No; but in separation from evil, they waited for the consolation of Israel, which could alone set the evil right. And just so it is in our day. The Christian cannot change Jezebel, nor can he be mixed up with the mere temple-worshippers, the so-called religious systems of the day. He walks, while leaving them to the judgment of the Lord, far from violent attacks upon them, in quiet separation from all the evil, patiently waiting and watching during the long dark night of sorrow for the morning star of the day of glory. " To him that overcometh will I give the morning star "; and this morning star is Christ Himself. And He is in this way known to those, who, though in the night, yet are not of the night, being children of the day. The morning star is gone before the world sees the sun, before the sun rises, before the day appears. But before the sun rises, there is the morning star for those who are watching in the night. The world will see the sun; but the morning star is gone, as far as the world is concerned, before the sun rises. So we shall be gone to be with the morning star before the day of Christ appears to the world; and when Christ shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

There are three passages which refer to this morning star, to which it is important to refer you. In 2 Peter 1 he says, " We have also a more sure (that is, confirmed) word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts." Israel's prophets had prophesied the full day of blessing on the earth, saying, " Arise, shine, for thy light is come." " A King shall reign in righteousness." And their testimony was confirmed to the disciples by the vision on the holy mount. They prophesied, too, of events coming on the world which marked out its judgment in all its forms of rebellious will and power-of Nineveh and Babylon, and the beasts which should arise upon the earth-of Jerusalem and its portion as departed from God: and judgment was thus pointed out, so that there was a warning light, which in the midst of the darkness of this world itself gave a light which recalled him that gave heed to it to avoid the crime of human will which led on to divine judgment. And this they did well to take heed to, until the day-star arose in their hearts, because it was the light in a dark place. But the day-star itself was something yet more excellent.

The prophecies, indeed, are plain, their warning clear; they guard me from being mixed up with the spirit of the world, whose judgment is announced. In Rev. 1 read of unclean spirits like frogs, going forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. If I do not even exactly understand who and what the frogs mean, still the grand import of the prophecy is evident. They are not the power of good; they lead the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. It is thus a light shining in a dark place, the night of this world's history on the absence of Christ. But the morning star is Christ Himself, as we see in Rev. 22 He is the bright and morning star. He will be the Sun of Righteousness to the world when He appears; but then there will be judgment. The wicked shall be as ashes under the soles of the feet-as, stubble-and the day of the Lord as fire. But the star appears to them that watch, before the sun appears to the world; for, as I can understand by the prophetical warning that this dark place is going to be judged, that " the night is far spent, and the day is at hand "; yet so night it is now, whatever people may think. And I want the morning star in my heart (the hope of Christ before the day, coming to receive the church to Himself-for the morning star is given to them that overcome) to cheer my soul through the long and dreary night, which is yet darker now than it was then, but still far spent, as the darkness of the night always thickens till

again the dawn of another day rise beyond on the other side of heaven and the morning star appear to fix the eye of the watchful and waiting soul, and cheer the heart with a sure and certain hope. And what, then, do we want of the things of this dark place, which is now under judgment for having nailed God's Son on the cross? Do not you, therefore, be seeking the riches, the honors, the power of this world, on which Christ is coming to execute judgment. One ray of the glory of Christ will at once wither up all the glory of this defiled world like an autumn leaf. Do not you, therefore, go on mixing yourself up with the world and heaping up riches. What will you do with them when Christ comes? Remember the Lord is at hand. But do I keep separate from this world merely because it is going to be judged? Certainly not. My whole portion for time and eternity is in Christ; the day-star has arisen in my heart. I am separated from the world by affection, and not by fear.

We have the coming of Christ as the morning star as a distinct thing from the sun-rise; for, when the sun rises upon the world, it will be for judgment. (See Isa. 2 and Mal. 4:1-3.) But beside and before all this, we have our portion in Christ; we are not of this world, we are redeemed out of it, and belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and shall join Him on high before He is manifested for the judgment of this world; and therefore the thunders of judgment cannot touch us, because we are seated with Him in heaven, from whence the judgments come. In Rev. 4 we have a most blessed and comforting picture of the position of the church. There are the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones, round about the throne, from whence the thunders, the lightnings, and the voices come: and they continue perfectly unmoved. But was this insensibility? Certainly not: for, when God Himself in His holy character is mentioned, immediately they fall down and cast their crowns before Him. Neither is this holiness the cause of any fear, when the living creatures proclaim the threefold holiness of Him who sits upon the throne; it is their worship breaks forth, and they fall down, and cast their crowns before Him in the full sense of the blessedness of Him who sits alone upon the throne. Christ, then, is this Morning Star, and if the day has dawned, and the day-star has arisen in our hearts, we know our association with Christ Himself, as within that place from which the judgment proceeds.

At the end of the Revelation we have the place of the Star again; chap. 22: 16. The Lord brings us back from the prophetic testimony to Himself-" I Jesus have sent mine angel "-" I am the root and the offspring of David [this is in connection with His being the source of promise and heir of it, as King of Zion-` Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies '], and the bright and morning star." But the moment He presents Himself as the bright and Morning Star, " the Spirit and the bride say, Come "; the Holy Ghost in the church says, " Come." This response is what is connected with Himself. The mention of Himself attracts and awakens the answer of the Spirit. This is the character in which the church herself has to say to His coming. God, in the love of His own heart, has associated the church with Jesus, and the very mention of His name awakens the cry, " Come! " for it touches a chord which gives an immediate response; and therefore He does not say here, " Behold, I come quickly." The question here is, not when He will come, but that it is Himself that is coming. He does not speak of His coming, blessed though that thought is, but He reveals Himself; and this it is that awakens the response of the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. We are for Himself, and shall be with Himself: it cannot be anything short of this, for He calls us " his body." What a glorious place this is! Not merely wonderful, but glorious-identification with the Christ of God. No explanation of prophetic scripture (however nice and true it may be-however useful as a solemn warning as regards this world) can ever take the place, in the soul that is taught of God, of knowing its living union with a coming Jesus, and of the present waiting for Himself. No mere explanation of His coming as a doctrine is the proper hope of the saint. That hope is not prophecy; it is the real and blessed and sanctifying expectancy of a soul that knows Jesus, and waits to see and to be with Himself.

The bride alone hears the voice of the Bridegroom, which at once calls out the expression of her desire of His coming. To this He responds, assuring her of it; and then the Revelation closes, leaving this as her own expectation, whatever He may have previously communicated to her concerning the judgment of this world, to which she does not belong. The Lord Jesus is represented as departing Himself, and coming and taking His bride to be with Him. Then, when the world is saying " Peace and safety," sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.

Paul closes 1 Thess. 4 with these words, " So shall we ever be with the Lord." And is that all? Yes, that is all; for to the heart which has learned to love Him he can say no more. Then he adds,2 " Of the times and seasons ye have no need that I write unto you." Ye are the children of the day, you wait for that. No explanation of this, as a doctrine, can ever reach the heart. You cannot make a person understand a relationship: to understand it he must himself be in it. An unquickened soul may understand in a manner what prophecy means; but nothing short of the sense and taste of being connected with Christ Himself can give the desire of His own personal coming. And why? Because for this the relationship must be known. In Rev. 22:16 the relationship is known, affection is awakened, and there is the immediate response.

Take a case: a woman is expecting her husband; he knocks at the door. Not a word is uttered out of his mouth; but his wife knows already who it is at the door, for it is he whom she loves that is there, and thus the natural feelings and affections proper for a wife are awakened, when the chord is touched by that which acts on them. But then the link must be in the heart; the affection must be there to produce the response; the chord which vibrates with this blessed truth must be there to be awakened by it. There is such a consciousness of union with Jesus, through the power of God's Spirit, that the very moment He is spoken of in this character, the chord is touched, and the instinctive cry is, " Come." No amount of intelligence, merely, will produce this. And what a difference between expecting the Lord Jesus, because He has made me and His saints a part of Himself and His bride, and looking for His coining to judge poor sinners! Now mark the practical effect of this looking for Jesus: it takes us clean out of the world up to heaven. If my heart is right in its affections for Him, I am looking too straight up on high to take notice of the things around me. Plenty of things there are around in the world, plenty of bustle and turmoil; but it does not disturb the blessed calm of my soul; because nothing can alter our indissoluble relationship with a coming Jesus, as nothing should divide us in hope.

To see the coming of the Lord Jesus for the church changes the character of a thousand scriptures. Take the Psalms for instance-those which speak about judgments on the ungodly, such as " the righteous washing their feet in the blood of the wicked." We are not the persons who say this. It is the language of Jews, and of godly Jews too, who will be delivered through the rod of power smiting their enemies, when all the tribes of the earth will wail because of Him. But do I want my enemies to be destroyed to get to Christ? Certainly not. I shall leave them to be with Him. It is a sorrowful thought indeed, though we recognize the just judgment of God, that such judgment will be accomplished upon those who despise Him and His grace. But as for me, I am going straight up to Christ in heaven. My place is in Him, while He is hid in God, in the nearest and most intimate union. I belong to the bride, a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. When we have hold of this blessed center, Christ, and with Him, therefore, of God Himself, then every scripture falls into its proper place; and we get a spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost of things in heaven and our connection with them, and things on earth and our separateness from them; and, above all, our hearts get into their proper place, for, being set on Jesus Himself, we are waiting for Him. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory, but we shall be forever with the Lord.

May the Lord give us such an apprehension of redemption and of our position in Him as may so fix our hearts on Himself that we may be daily walking down here like unto men that wait for their Lord, who has promised to come and take us to Himself, watching in the midst of a night of darkness, aware, that it is the night, although we are not of the night, but watching and waiting for the day, having the morning star arisen in our hearts! May the Lord keep us from idols; and above all from aught that savors of Jezebel, that we may be in dread, for fear of grieving Him in any of those things which have come in to spoil and corrupt that which He once planted so beautiful, to be for the manifestation of His glory in this dark and evil world.

"Thou Hast Left Thy First Love": An Extract, "Thou Hast Left Thy First Love"

(Rev. 2:4)

He says to the Ephesian Church, “Have you left your first love? Yes, you have.” “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen.” “I have loved you, and given myself for you,” was just the measure of the love to Him in which they should have walked as “the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood” —put under the guardianship of the blood as to all holy conversation, as seen in the priests. The blood was put on the hand, the foot, and the ear, both of the leper to be cleansed and of the priest at his consecration, so that nothing dishonoring such a guardianship was to be allowed. Then comes the question, Have we acted according to the blood that has been put upon us? Has nothing passed it in mind, act, or walk but what has been according to God? The Lord always exercises judgment in a Church, though He has long patience with it. God never lowers the standard of the claims of His first blessing, though He may be patient when His people fail.

What must Christ necessarily be jealous about but His love to the Church, and therefore just as impossible that He can be satisfied without the return of her love to Him; for, remember, that it is only love that can satisfy love. The very reproach He makes brings out the strength of His love to the Church, which cannot rest until it gets the same from her; for He cannot cool down to be satisfied with a feeble return of His love, however much the Church may have cooled down in her thoughts about Christ’s love to her. There may be still much outwards fruit in “works, and labor, and patience;” but let the toil and labor be what it may, the spring of it all is gone—You have left your first love; there is the grand mischief. It is no matter how much you toil and labor, if love to Christ be not the motive of your service, it will only be, as the apostle says, “like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,” which dies with the sound thereof.

In Ephesus, then, we get the first great principle of failure, and therefore the grand general judgment which came upon the whole Church. “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works [see how He brings them back to the point of their departure], or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” He cannot allow that to remain in the world which fails to show forth the great love wherewith He loved the Church; for if He did, He would not be “the faithful and true witness.” This principle of tender, faithful reproach is the blessed proof that His love never grows cold, however much ours may fail.

In this respect the Lord’s way of dealing with individual souls is exactly the same as with the Church. He takes notice of all departure from Him, but the door is always open for “repentance;” and when the sin is judged and seen in the light in which God sees it, then there is nothing to hinder immediate restoration. The moment the conscience bows under the sin, and confesses it, then it gets into an upright position; an uprightness of soul, where evil has been is shown in the consciousness of evil and the power to confess it; and therefore the Church of God, or an individual soul, must get into this state of uprightness before God in order for Him to restore it. (Job 33:23-26.) Get sin judged in the conscience, and then there is the revelation of the unfailing love of God to meet the need. It is thus in the daily details of Christian life. Judgments may pass upon His people, but His chastening love is seen in it all.

And thus is learned the reason why the Lord reproaches the Church for leaving her first love. There is in it the revelation of His perfect and unchanged love shining through the condemnation of their state. And do we not see this dawn in the natural relationships of life? Take husband and wife. A wife may take care of the house, and fulfill all her duties so as to leave nothing for which her husband could find fault; but if her love for him has diminished, will all her service satisfy him, if his love to her be the same as at the first? No. Well, then, if it will not do for him, it will not do for Christ: He must have the reflection of His love. He says, “I am not blind to your good qualities, but I want yourself.” Love, which was once the spring of every action, is gone; and therefore the service is valueless. If love is wanting, the rest is as nothing. It is true that our love cannot answer worthily, but still it may answer truly; for at least Christ looks for undivideness of object, though there be not adequateness of affection. There must be dividedness of heart if there is instability of affection. This was the secret of all failure at Ephesus. Undivideness of heart as regarded the object of affection had been lost, singleness of eye was gone, and the perfect reflection of that love which had laid hold of the Church for Himself was gone.

Still, while Christ says, “I have somewhat against thee,” He marks everything that is good. “Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.” Well, then, it might be said, What can the Lord want more? He says, “I want herself.” Remember this as regards the Church. Then He says, “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and do the first works.” To me this is a very solemn but touching word to us, for we have gone much farther from our first love than they; still the heart of him that is faithful finds a certain refuge in Christ, for his soul finds in the very reproach an infallible proof of His unchanged love.

What does He take notice of as excellent here? “Works, and labor, and patience.” Nothing positive is named that marks the decline, but the works that were done were not linked with the first love. And here let us observe, that the Church has a positive service very distinct from what the Jews ever had. God was not looking for the Jews to go out in love, but the Church, having received grace, is to go forth in grace to call poor sinners in. The Jew had the law as a wall to keep righteousness in, but no open door for love to flow out.

Take the Thessalonians, who, in this, are in direct contrast to these Ephesian saints, and who were in the freshness of their “first love.” What is noticed of them? “Their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”—just the very same things that are commended in Ephesus. What was the difference then? Not that they had no works, but that the true spring of them was gone; while in the Thessalonians the spring of it all was in full play. The three great principles of Christianity, faith, hope, and charity were all at Thessalonica (that is, the full link of the heart with the source of power). The faith which characterized their “work” kept them walking in communion with God. The love which characterized their “labor” linked them with the source of power. And in the “hope” which characterized their patience we get the coming of the Lord as the object for their souls for their patient waiting in service. Thus, in the Thessalonians you get spiritual

power, Christ Himself as the object, and love characterizing it all. Suppose I go laboring, and the spirit of love is in my work; what a difference there will be when the whole service is stamped with the character of this love! If it is only in preaching the gospel, how fully shall I set forth God’s love to a lost world if the love of Christ is freshly springing up in my own soul! But, alas! how often have we to reproach ourselves with going on in a round of Christian duty, faithful in general intention, but not flowing from the fresh realization of the love of Christ to our souls.

J.N.D.

Christian Truth: Volume 13, Church in Pergamos, The

In the message to "the church in Pergamos," the Lord is seen exercising a special form of judicial power, as "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges" (v. 12). We read (Heb. 4): "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Lord is here presented as having this thoroughly piercing power, which judges and discerns the secret workings of the heart and conscience.

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." v. 13. That is where the Church now found itself, where Satan's throne is—for he is the prince of it—in the world. And the faithful may find themselves there too, if the Church be there (Caleb and Joshua had to go the whole round of the wilderness with the rest, though not sharers in their unbelief); we have to separate ourselves from the evil around, though we may not be separate from its results. We may find ourselves to be in feebleness and weakness, as the faithful in this church did; but our comfort like theirs is that the Lord says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest."

God in His grace takes full knowledge of all that concerns us, not only of our conduct, our ways, and condition, but also of the circumstances in which we are, saying, as it were, I know that you are where Satan's seat is, and this, even when He may still have "somewhat" against us. There is great comfort in knowing this. We may be placed, by means over which we had no control, in a very trying position, but in one which it might not be at all the mind of the Lord that we should quit, where Christian conduct would be very difficult; as, for instance, a converted child in an ungodly, worldly family, where there is nothing of the Spirit of Christ. The Lord would not merely in such a case judge His child's conduct, as to those things in which she might have failed. He would do that indeed, but He would also take the most thorough knowledge and notice of the circumstances in which she was; yes, of every little circumstance that rendered it trying. He just as well knew the power of Pharaoh and the detail of his tyranny as He did the crying and groans of the Israelites. "I know," He says, "that he will not let you go." There is indeed great comfort in thus seeing the Lord's perfect knowledge as to where we dwell, because it may not be always His will to take us out of the place, nor yet to change the circumstances in which we are. He may choose to have us glorify Him there, and learn through them what, perhaps, we could not learn elsewhere.

We are too apt to think that we must do great works in the Lord's name, in order to glorify Him; there may not always be opportunity for this (there does not appear to have been opportunity for great works in service without to this church). He takes notice if we do but hold fast His name amid circumstances which make even that measure of faithfulness difficult—"Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith," etc. v. 13.

The Lord gives His people all this encouragement, and yet says, "I have a few things against thee." (vv. 14, 15.) In the first place, they were slipping back into the world, some of them having already fallen into the habits of it, eating and drinking with the drunken (Matt. 24:49). And second, they were beginning to allow of evil in the church, through pretense of liberty. He therefore warns, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth." v. 16. Worldliness characterized the danger of this church, and it required the sword with two edges to cut between their evil and the circumstances in which they were; if this were not effected, it is "I... will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

But at the same time that He thus warns, there is plenty of encouragement given—promises suited to counteract their temptations (v. 17). Were they tempted "to eat things sacrificed unto idols" with the world? the promise to "him that overcometh" is, I will give him "to eat of the hidden manna." If they had grace to separate themselves from the open evil, He would reward them with the unseen blessing of the heavenly places; there should be this feeding on "the hidden manna." Again; were they tempted to deny the name and faith of Christ? the promise given is "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." To keep them from slipping back into the world, to strengthen them in incurring, as must needs be, in separation, the disapprobation of so many, He promises them inward blessings to cheer their hearts.

The "white stone" seems to mark the individual approbation of Christ; the "new name," peculiar intercourse between Christ and the individual, different from that which all shall share alike, different from the public joy. There is a public joy. All saints will together enjoy the comforts of Christ's love, will enter into the "joy of their Lord," and with one heart and one voice will sound His praise. There will also be joy in seeing the fruit of our labors, as it is said, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" 1 Thess. 2:19. And again there will be another joy in seeing the company of the redeemed, all according to Christ's heart in holiness and glory. But besides this public joy, there will be Christ's peculiar private individual recognition and approval—the "white stone" and the "new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Christ speaks elsewhere of His own new name as Head of the new creation. There are old names belonging to the Lord Jesus, but His new name is connected with that into which His Father brings Him, when all things which have failed in the hands of man will be established and developed in Him; and having thus Himself a new name, He gives us also a promise of a new name. We are not only to know Jesus and be known of Him according to present circumstances, but to have a special knowledge of Him in glory according to the glory.

Our souls must value this personal approval of Christ, as well as think of the public approval. The latter will be great blessedness, but there is no peculiar affection in it, nothing that stamps peculiar love on the individual. Glory will be common to all, but glory is not affection. This "new name" is a different thing; it is the proof of Christ's value for a person who has been faithful in difficult and trying circumstances, for one who has acted on the knowledge of His mind, and overcome through communion with Him. This will be met by special individual approbation. There is the public joy and approval in various ways, and the manifestation of our being loved by the Father as Jesus is loved. But this is not

all that is given for our encouragement in individual conduct through trial, failure, and difficulty; there is also this special private joy of love.

When the common course of the Church is not straight, not in the full energy of the Holy Ghost, though there may be a great deal of faithfulness, yet there is danger of disorder. We find that the Lord then applies Himself more to the walk of individual saints, and suits His promises to the peculiar state in which they are. There is a peculiar value in this. It takes one out of all fancied walking (the especial danger which belongs to such a state of things), each according to his own will, chalking out a path for himself because of the unfaithfulness and disobedient walk of the professing body. What faith has to do in such circumstances is to lay hold intelligently, soberly, and solemnly on the Lord's mind, and to walk according to it, strengthened by the promises which He has attached to such a path as He can own.

But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or, at least, that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us?—even in the Church to be thought nothing of?—that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name... which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"? Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh, think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favor, but seeks honor (as we do) one of another instead! I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you, which would you prefer?—the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you, the secret knowledge of His love and approval. He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, The latter. Both will be ours, if faithful, but we shall value this most, and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 2:1-11, Fragment on

It is good to be occupied with spiritual affections, or rather with the subjects which vivify them, with those things which are not seen, which God has revealed to us, and which are of the world to come. The Holy Spirit presents to us many of those things which we shall enjoy later, and with much more detail than we can expect.

That which the Spirit says to the churches is for the peace and the joy of the children of God in the glory which is coming. The Spirit says, " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This, therefore, concerns us individually. According to His faithfulness, the Lord Jesus takes cognizance of the present state of the church. That which is in question here is not accomplished salvation, but the particular state in which the church is found, or even the state of such and such an individual, as we may judge from verse 2. " I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience," etc. Then also, " He that hath an ear, let him hear," etc. At the same time, Jesus is there revealed to us as judging the state of those to whom this is addressed. There are also particular promises fit to sustain the remnant of faithful ones, in the midst of the special circumstances by which their faith is tried. The promises which are presented here, differ from those which are made to the church in an absolute and general manner. They apply also to the church, and the church enjoys them. However, they have particularly as their object to sustain faith in the circumstances in which we may be found, whether as a remnant in the midst of the unfaithfulness of the mass of the professors, or as faithful in the midst of the trials which we are called to pass through. Now, for the conflict, we need discernment, in order to understand where the conflict is found; what is its main point or specialty.

Faithfulness is found in contrast with the evil which the Lord reveals, because we are on God's side in this world.

We need to understand that the interests of Christ are our own-that His battles are our battles; and the more we lay hold of this idea, the stronger and happier we are (Ex. 17:16). Happily, in Jesus these things do not fail us. Although Jesus identifies Himself with the church, He nevertheless judges the state of the church, and here He presents Himself as judge, but in love.

The book is divided into three distinct parts: first, the things which John saw; secondly, the things which are; thirdly, those which are to come. The things which John saw are mentioned in chapter 1; those which are, in chapters 2 and 3, including that which concerns the seven churches; those which are to come begin at chapter 4, and fill the remainder of the Apocalypse. Christ manifests Himself here as judge, not as in the latter day for the wicked, but as a priest who discerns all in order to remedy the evil.

You will find in Leviticus that, after the consecration of the priests, all the things as to which it was a question of being clean and unclean are presented together. It was they who were to know how to discern between the clean and the unclean. The priesthood had to discern everything. And it is also what belongs to the Christian, not as to one who fears the imputation of sin (although he has a responsibility), but because he has been anointed by God to distinguish between good and evil, according to the holiness of the service of God.

That is why Jesus takes to Himself this character of authority; that is the general idea which He gives of Himself. " These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," v. 1.

We find in all the addresses to the churches these words, " I know thy works." He takes cognizance of all that is done. It is very comforting that God has put us in such a position; and we are responsible according to the grace of the position. This responsibility increases according to the measure of grace in which we are placed. A servant and a slave do that which the master demands; but the child enters more intimately into the interests of the family, and he is responsible according to the position in which he is placed. It is good that we too should consider ourselves under this point of view. An Israelite might have done things which a priest would not have dared to do; many things were required of the priest for the service of God, to which no other man among the people was bound; then he was to discern good from evil, according to his nearness to God, as the anointed of God. We ourselves, also, are priests. We have the knowledge of good and evil- a privilege acquired through sin at the beginning; so that this has been our ruin, but, at the same time, a thing which proceeded from Him who willed it thus-a thing good in itself, and which we possess now according to the intelligence of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of the obedience of the second Adam. When Satan led away Adam to infringe the prohibition which God had made him, Satan added, " God doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof "-of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil-" then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The word adds, " The LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil."

Two things are always found, as in the garden of Eden, responsibility and life-the two trees. Adam acted in his responsibility, and failed as to it, before having life. This is why God must needs drive him out of Eden, because God did not permit that he should have life together with sin.

There are the two great principles, responsibility of good and evil, and life: Christ alone has reconciled them. When the law was introduced, it presented responsibility, and not life. The law places man in responsibility as to his salvation; but instead of life, it pronounces condemnation and death. Christ, on the contrary, takes the responsibility on Himself, and becomes at the same time the source of life. Christ took upon Himself our responsibility before the judgment of God, and has placed us under a much higher responsibility-responsibility according to that life which He has given us. Consequently, He judges Christians, not to condemn them, in their everyday conduct. But treating them according to the holiness of this life, He judges their walk, that grace may always be given them, according to their need, and to maintain them in communion with the Father and with Himself. He intercedes at the same time for His own before God, not to obtain their justification, which He has perfectly accomplished, but to take them out of their difficulties and maintain them in the path of faith.

Jesus, therefore, takes notice of the state of the church and says, " I know thy works." It is not to condemn, but it is as being priest, and thus having to manifest the new man according to all the grace which is given him, and we shall see how far this responsibility goes.

Verses 2, 3. " I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." Here are many excellent things, and one might have thought that there was nothing but approbation; but it is not so. " Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." Christ cannot come down from the height of His love. He would have fruits according to the love which He has for us. A worldly person would say, Is it absolutely necessary that I should do that? Have I need of these things? Am I bound to do that, as a Christian? But the love of Christ cannot be content without seeing fruits. It is like a father who loves that his child should succeed, that he should bear fruits capable of rejoicing him, and in keeping with the love which he shows him. The child may be slothful or lazy, but the father devotes himself to him; if there is not a response to the care taken by that love, neither is there contentment on the part of the father. If there is not with the conscience of that love, the same ready response as at the beginning, there is not the sound which goes to the heart of Jesus. It is better not to play at all than to play false tones. One has abandoned one's first love, and there is not that love which responds to love. Jesus is not a hard Master; He only requires these things from us in love. He says, " I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." It is something which does not suit the ear of Christ, something which is not in tune: it is the first thing of which Christ takes notice-" thou hast left thy first love." They had patience; they could not bear them which were evil; they had labored for the name of Jesus, but-" they had left their first love." If love is wanting, something essential is wanting. The heart has begun to be occupied with itself. A wife may do for her husband all that she did before, work as much, be wanting in nothing as to her duties; but if the husband does not find in her that which satisfies the heart, all is wanting: the wife has ceased to be occupied with him in the same manner.

We love something, and if it is the affections of faith, Christ is the object of them. As soon as He ceases to be the object of our thoughts, the thing is seen; He at least perceives it. After being delivered, we are full of love, and we only see the light. We think that sin is dead within. In the measure that the heart is filled with other things, the springs of this love are weakened; and if we ask ourselves, Do you still think as much of your Savior as when you received Him for the first time into your heart? We notice that we have left our first love. I can be occupied with good things; I may seek souls; but if I no longer think as much about Jesus-about what He is for me- all is marred. If I am before God, I am always little; I feel myself responsible to God, and I am nothing. I judge myself, there is love; but if I get far from Him, I think of myself, and weakness increases. There is no longer the same discernment. There is no longer the same love. One is no longer at a height to view things as Christ views them; one is not at a height to show grace. This is the leaving of one's first love, and of the patience of our hope.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:3), reminds them continually of " their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ." In the Ephesian church are found works, labor, and patience; but they are no longer the work of faith, the labor of love, the patience of hope. The Lord says to them, " Thou hast abandoned thy first love." Each one of us can address the same question to himself, " Am I as much occupied with Christ? Have I not left my first love? " And, if we are in this state, cannot the Lord apply these words to us? " Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Verse 7. " To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life." It is not with us as with Adam, who had only a responsibility of obedience: our responsibility refers to a conflict with Satan; and the proof that we are the strongest is that we can conquer the power of Satan. We may fail, it is true. If we were in nowise in the conflict against Satan, it would be because we had not life; but, besides this conflict in principle against him, one must also conquer in the details.

The tree of life, which is here referred to, is no longer in man's paradise, but in God's. In Eden, the paradise of man, there were two trees. Satan succeeded in entering there, and all was marred; but God's paradise was arranged by Him and for Him, after all was lost, and that by a work of love and glory, which causes the other to be forgotten. The paradise of God is a work of grace, which is the consequence of what it is God's good pleasure to do when man has failed. The paradise of man was a test of what man is; that of God is the consequence of the fact that Christ has resisted and overcome all evil. As the other was the place where the responsibility of the first Adam was-responsibility as to which he failed-we are placed with the life of Christ in us, and put to the test in the midst of evil with that life, not as men, but as Christians. The world thinks to be put to the test as men, but they are mistaken; the Christian alone is put to the test, in order to manifest in the world a life which is not of this world. Now let us see how Christ introduces us into the midst of all that.

The question is not, if I conduct myself well, I shall be accepted. No, it is not a question of that. The world thinks that it is a question of a conflict, destined to satisfy certain demands of God; it is an error. For the Christian, the conflict is the exercise of the power of the Holy Spirit in him who has already eternal life, who obtains the victory over the world, of which Satan is the prince and the head. In order for us to enter into the conflict, it is necessary for Christ to take away all our sins; for if any remained, it would be with God that we should have to do. The difficulty was found on that side, and it is the practical state of souls not set free; but we must be without sin before God; and being His in this world, and He being for us, we can enter into this conflict-where evil does not enter at all, where flesh cannot subsist-and there have the victory over Satan.

Verses 8-10. The Lord addresses Himself here to the church of Smyrna, as being " the first and the last, which was dead and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is very evident that the promises, and the character of Christ, apply to the circumstances of that church. Here is something striking. It is not a question of knowing

how far the heart responds to Christ; but of knowing if it is worth while leaving everything, even one's own life, in order to enjoy the privileges which are in Christ.

That which comes in here is the result of leaving the first love, as a church: for it is not necessarily true as to individuals. Persecutions follow as the consequence of that which is not in the mind of God. The widows complain of being neglected in the daily ministration; Acts 6:1. It is no longer Christ who alone occupies the thoughts: they have left their first love. When that happens, the world holds somewhat the place of Christ.

The church must learn that everything is above. " Fear none of those things which thou shalt have to suffer." Christ might have said, Thou shalt not suffer; but He wishes us to understand that we must be little, poor, and despised, and that one cannot be rich. I do not speak of temporal riches, but of that poverty which has nothing but its faith to present; and that is what God wishes. If the church suffer, if it is tormented in different ways, there is also another suffering. The church had nothing to present but its faith, which could sustain it. Now the Jews who were there boasted of being the true people of God; they said they were rich, and blasphemed. The Christians, for them, were only miserable heretics, and sectarians: and the church felt its position contemptible in the eyes of those who, according to appearance, were the people of God. That is more painful than when the world speaks evil of us. The church was afflicted, persecuted, and poor; but Jesus says to it, " Fear none of those things." The Jews said insulting things; but the Lord said, " Thou art rich." In this we have a lesson. Christ does not prevent our suffering: we must make up our minds to suffer; but if Christ says to us, " Thou art rich," that is enough for us. And He will only have for disciples those who are content with what He says, " Thou art rich." If any one is not satisfied with that, well, let him go to the world.

There is, however, something remarkable here. Jesus says to them, " The devil shall put some of you into prison." He attributes it to Satan, as if He were not able to prevent it. He says you shall be tried (v. 10). I leave thee to suffer; it is the time of the power of darkness, but it will end. Whatever, then, may be the power of Jesus, He changes nothing in the position of actual suffering. It is necessary that the moral ways of God should have their course, and that the work should be accomplished according to the good or the evil which is found in those in whom it takes place. It is necessary that He should leave to the enemy his own part, according to that which is due to him, so to speak-according to the state of those who are the objects of the government of God. He leaves power to Satan in order to manifest the glory of Christ by the church; and if we are not near Christ, Satan gets the victory as to things present, and Christ is not glorified.

All power belongs to Christ: we have nothing to fear. But Satan is there, and the church is responsible for the manifestation of the glory of Christ; and as soon as we leave Christ, we can no longer do it. It is a question of realizing all this power of Christ, according to the position where we are individually; and we must be near enough to Christ to get the victory over Satan, and to do perfectly well all that we are called to do according to our position. It is not a question of leading or of being a general. If each soldier does his duty in his own place, the victory is won; and that may go so far as to lay down one's life. It is not a question of getting life: we have it; and we shall reign. It is a question of the church placed there to manifest the power of Christ by the Holy Spirit, to manifest His glory where evil exists, before spiritual wickednesses, and to enjoy the same results of the victory as Christ Himself: the crown of life in the paradise of God, as Jesus has Himself, and with Him.

It is not only not being lost; but it is to be with God, and to get the victory over Satan, who has the power of death. What we have to understand is that each one in his place, from the head down to the skirts of the garment, and however little he may be, has his place and his responsibility to manifest the power of Christ; and if he is not in the power of Christ, he is overcome. May God give us this strength, and render us capable of accomplishing in all things His will!

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 2:8-17, Fragment on

Last time we were speaking of the character of judgment running through this book of Revelation. We see the Lord in these epistles judging the churches, and then the world; we see Him taking notice of everything: " I will judge every one of you according to his works."

It is well to see the difference between the church as seen in Christ, and as on earth representing Christ. She partakes of His glory, as united to Him; and as a vessel contains His glory, and represents it on earth-the " epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." Responsibility down here does not touch salvation in any wise. He had promised, in His faithfulness, to carry them on towards the fullness of His glory, and He judges them for failure in the use of the responsibility He laid upon them. God's own people are profited by it, but the " simple pass on, and are punished," and at length, as a body, they are " spued out of his mouth."

All chastening is intended to turn to profit for the church. In the address to each church there is a particular revelation of Christ corresponding to the peculiar judgment, and there are special promises to each. It is not here the supply of grace from the Head for the body, as in Ephesians, but the responsibility of individuals in their walk. Another thing we have to remember is, that the object of these addresses is not to show the power of the Holy Ghost actively at work. If it is judgment, it clearly is not this. Christ cannot be said to judge the work of the Holy Ghost. It is power in grace if the Holy Ghost works, but Christ's judgment is His estimate of the practical use made of the privileges given. The Lord looks at the church as responsible for all the love of which it is the object. The candlestick is to be taken away when there is no profit. It is not individuals judged here, but churches-what " the Spirit saith to the churches," and there is no return found; therefore it is to be taken out of its place.

Then the address is to " him that hath an ear, let him hear." There is individual energy to overcome, and it is overcoming in the condition in which they were-it is overcoming things within, not overcoming the world. " This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith "-there was that as well, of course; but here it is overcoming evil in the church. We must remember that the church has fallen from its first love, when Smyrna is addressed; and the church ceases to be a place of security to the saint, the moment the Spirit so addresses the church as failing; therefore individuals are singled out. I get myself as an individual singled out, but the church addressed. I have to make good my certainty by the word. The church may be right in this or that; but I have to discern by the word what I can follow, and what I cannot. This is a principle of great importance. It is not that there were no blessings for these churches-they were highly commended in many things. But the churches were being judged by Christ's word.

Development is a common word in use now, but it has in it the principle of infidelity. There is nothing in God to be developed. The word is a revelation of God in Christ. In

John 1 we find it said, " That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which our hands have handled of the word of life: for the life was manifested," etc. It is clear there can be no development of that which has been manifested. Unless we can get something beyond " God is light," there can be no development. There is much to be learned about Him; but it is a Person here presented, not a doctrine. If it were a doctrine, we might get something added; but it is not a question of doctrine, but a living Person that has been revealed, and in the address to this first church we find that they have left their first love-they have left something; there is no development in that. God cannot set up anything but what is perfect, nothing contrary to His mind, or inferior to His mind. Look at man. We see him brought out perfect, but he could not keep his first estate. Then there was a perfect priesthood established, but there was failure in Nadab and Abihu. He " planted wholly a right seed." What comes from God must be perfect, and cannot by any other operation. There may be decline, and there is decline. This is a very simple truth, but it cuts up by the roots a whole system of thoughts and feelings and judgments.

Then we find another grand principle brought out here. He exercises the heart by bringing in the hostile power of the world to hinder decay, and to separate from the evil around- and this is tribulation. Take Christ Himself, see His perfectness as the Servant of God: " He learned obedience by the things that he suffered." Much brought out through trial, opposition, slighting; His path led, darker and darker, down to the cross. He met Satan's power, and even the wrath of God. He overcame all, and is set down with the Father on His throne, and in it all, it only brought out the growing manifestation of the perfection in Him.

There is another thing with regard to us. Persecution and trial are used to hinder our departure from God. There is the constant tendency in the heart to take rest in prosperous circumstances, the flesh turns to what is agreeable in the world; but it will not do. God says, " Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest." Persecution is the natural portion of the children of God. When the church was taking rest at the beginning, persecution soon came in. In Matthew the principles and character of the kingdom were brought out in the sermon on the mount: " Blessed "-" Blessed ""Blessed," etc. Blessing is the character, and then the grace of Christ was just beginning to be manifested; the miracles had begun to be performed, etc., and God was now showing them what was " blessed " in His sight. Towards the end of the Gospel, instead of blessing, it is, "Woe"—"Woe"—"Woe"; "your house is left unto you desolate "; because the opposition was fully brought out by the perfect manifestation of what was in Him.

God sends us tribulation, opposition from without, to bring out grace, and to hinder decay. With Christ it was always and only the former. But take the case of Job: God uses Satan as an instrument of blessing to him, as He does with the church. About Job God begins the conversation, " Hast thou considered my servant Job? " etc.; and God uses the trial to bring out to him what Job had never known before. Then, again, take the case of Paul. He had to be taken up into the third heaven, to get such a sight of the glory as to fit him for the peculiar service to the church to which he was called. Then what use would the flesh make of this? It would puff up. Then a messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him, and he prays that it may be removed. But he is not to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, but gets the assurance, " My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." This it was that strengthened him for after service, not the being in the third heaven and the sight of the glory, in one sense, for it was to be God's strength, not Paul's. Take another case in Peter. He needed to be sifted, because of the self-confidence in him: therefore the Lord allows Satan to sift him, but He prayed for him. When confidence in self was pulled down, then he could be used to help others.

It seems astonishing that God should use Satan as the instrument to try the saints here; but it is so, and He says, " the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried." In this church we find the state is decaying (they have lost their first love), and God has to put her into the furnace. She gets into the place where Satan persecuted before; she gets where Satan's seat is. " I know thy works, and tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich)." God knew that they were rich, they were multiplied in the world, and then there was a tendency to rest in the circumstances put into, instead of in the Lord Himself. The Lord would not suffer this. He must put them into trouble, because He would make them lean on Him. He would cast the church on her own proper position altogether. He will give them to find the hostility of the world, in order that they may be brought back to know their own privileges in their own real position. How strange that the church should need persecution, not only that Christ should suffer them to be cast into prison, but also that they were to be faithful even to death! And the promise to them is " the crown of life." They may be martyrs, but there is positive blessing and honor for them. Christians are seeking what the world does. If the Lord turns the current, He puts them through the fire. If the church has the world, in any sense down here, it must give up a heavenly, a crucified, Christ.

You cannot associate the world and religion, but it was the object of Judaism to connect them. It set about to mingle the tastes and feelings of nature with God, and whenever the world is connected with religion, there must be priesthood let in, because the moment you get man as he is, he cannot stand before God. But now Christians are priests-no need of an order of priests between God and you; you are a heavenly, not an earthly people. " He suffered without the gate, let us also go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." The moment the blood is carried into the heavenly places, we are associated with Him, and we are taken outside the world altogether, and connected with the heavenly places. Judaism connected the two. Our place is outside the camp, and inside the veil, with Him. Carnal ordinances connected man with God under Judaism; but when Christ is rejected on earth, the place is in heaven, and there cannot longer be the mixture of the two. We are raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Him. We have no middle thing if Christ is our portion. The moment we lose the sense of this, God must let loose the power of Satan to keep us in a straight path.

The character in which He addresses this church is as the First and the Last, One dead and alive. Looked at as man, He is dead to this world, cast out and rejected. We now must, like Mary Magdalene, get an empty tomb, or a living Christ. If your heart is upon Christ, all that you can find in this world is an empty tomb with nothing in it. Then you have nothing to do with the world, for all heavenly blessing is yours. The constant tendency is to slip away from this, because, if we do not cleave to the world, it cleaves to us. This was the case of the churches here. They needed to be put through the fire to separate them from the world. Judaism had crept in; then development (Gnostics, etc.), " intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds." Then persecution comes, and blows upon all this. The history of these times shows that the living power in the church was not in its doctrines, but in its martyrs.

Verse 13. " I know where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is." Here is another and more subtle character of evil. The Lord gives them all the credit He can. It has passed through tribulation, sent on account of worldly corruption from without, but here there is doctrinal corruption within. It is in the world where Satan's seat is, and it has been living there ever since. (It is not a question here of individual conduct, but of

the corporate position of the church.)

It was at the cross of Christ that the world emphatically became the seat of Satan-not that, as some say, his power was then defeated. The world had been first put under man, tried on the ground of responsibility; then it had been under trial in the exercise of power in Nebuchadnezzar. Satan risked everything upon getting rid of Christ, but then it was his own power was really broken-he just destroyed himself; but he has ever since led the world (as the universal instrument of Satan) to reject Christ; from that moment he is the prince of this world-until that rejection he could not be said to be so. It was when Christ was on the cross he led the mind of the world. The church has been taken out of the world, to be associated with the true Prince; but alas! it has taken an earthly character. But if it is taken up, and rejected with Christ, then what has it to do with the world? " Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? " etc. There is no possibility of escaping it in any other way but as being dead with Christ. Ordinances are not Christ. They have been nailed to the cross of Christ. If we are dead with Christ, we are dead to ordinances. Man in the flesh must have something between him and the Head. If united to the Head, there is nothing wanted to bring near.

" But I have a few things against thee. Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." He had taught them the evil of this corrupting association through a persecuting world; but Christ could never say, " There is Balaam's teaching for you." He could never talk of the moral acquiescence in evil as the proper trial of the saints-not like the tribulation before. You have got Balaam then, not Jezebel yet. Balaam would associate them with the world, but Christ says I have passed through death for you, and now you must for Me. He would not step in to hinder the consequences of the position into which they had brought themselves, but He could own their faithfulness.

Balaam could not succeed in enchantment against Israel. The question was whether Israel might pass into Canaan, and Balaam (a frightful character) was employed to hinder them if he could. The effort was to get Jehovah to curse His people, but he could not, and he was forced only to bless. There is no possibility of using Satan's power against the people of God. God held the lips of Balaam, and obliged him to bless in spite of himself. " Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He has no power as an adversary. It is as a tempter he has power. When the enemy could not succeed in bringing a curse upon the people, he sought to seduce them into wickedness, and then how could God bring them in? (Num. 25). In this church we find he has come in as a seducing Satan, instead of being without as a persecuting Satan. Then they were exhorted to fear none of those things which should come upon them. Weakness is in fear. When we look into the persecution we tremble. Out of it we look out to Christ, where there is faith. Thus the faithful one is separated from the world by that persecution, and made to feel what his own proper portion is. But when the church is on Satan's territory, he says, You shall have as much as you like-as much as ever I can give you-for I will seduce you into it. In enriching them with earthly things, he seduces them from God. Balaam was a prophet, but a false prophet, just as the evil servant who hid his lord's money was a servant, though an evil one; and we find him coming in within the church (ver. 14), and if he can make it all ease in the world, comfortable in the world, his end is gained. Then they might go and eat in the idols' temples: doctrine of the Nicolaitanes follows-internal corruption. In Nicolaitanism we see the flesh acting in the church; through Balaam the world had come in. It is very sad to see how the church declined after the tribulation had brightened it up for God, and our hearts ought to bear the burden. By being thus associated with the world, by being content to dwell where Satan's seat is, they had got the door open for evil doctrines-Antinomianism, a fleshly religion of demons. Satan did not want to persecute when he could corrupt. Here it is only teaching false doctrine, in the next church we see there are children born. The promise to the faithful here is a very sweet and peculiar one.

The word is that by which Christ draws the church to Himself. He comes out with a " sharp sword with two edges," V. 12. The word of God is the resource of the faithful, and the promise is more individual. In the sorrow and pain of seeing those belonging to God not departing from iniquity, there is bound up in the heart this link of secret fidelity to God which associates them with a suffering Christ. They shall have to eat of the hidden manna. It was hidden faithfulness which was to be rewarded with this hidden manna; the fruits, indeed, would be manifest to all around, but it was a secret between God and the heart, an inward link with that which never changes in its character. What is this hidden manna? We find manna spoken of as the bread which cometh down from heaven: " My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." The manna for the Israelites was spread about the camp, not hidden. Christ is the provision for daily walk. But besides this they were to take a pot, and lay it up before Jehovah: when they had got into the land, they were to have the memorial of what they had enjoyed in the wilderness. So we in heaven shall have God's eternal delight in what Christ has been down here as the suffering Christ. The memory of what Christ has been in the wilderness is God's eternal delight With us, he that has been faithful with Christ in rejection from this world will have the everlasting joy of fellowship with God in the delight in Christ as the suffering Man, which He had and has and will have forever. It will be the same kind of delight, though of course always in different measure. If we are walking faithfully with a rejected Christ, instead of letting Balaam into our hearts, we shall enjoy Christ down here now; but we cannot enjoy Him while we are going on with the world. If we so pretend, it becomes Nicolaitanism or Antinomianism. Even in the Gospels what enjoyment can we have if walking in the spirit of the world? The imagination may be fed, but the soul is not satisfied. God has not given His Son to be played with, but to be fed upon.

There are public joys in heaven, thousands of voices echoing the song, but there are secret ones also. Joys with Christ we all share in common, but He must have our individual affections as well as our common affections-" a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." That name has no meaning for any one else but him to whom it is given. Christ reveals Himself to the soul, " and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy." Christ has joys for us as individuals, and my joy you cannot have, and yours I cannot have. This joy of communion will never be interrupted, and individual communion will not hinder the universal joy. This promise specially relates to the future, but it is the source of joy and strength now. The Spirit of God makes it anticipative of that day. We may have now this " white stone " from Christ, this secret expression of His grace and love to my heart. Others cannot have it for me. How it makes this white stone more precious than anything else, though all the world may think I am wrong! Of course, I must judge of all by the word. The world may talk about things, but Christ has talked to me, and He will own in that day all He has said to me.

What a sorrowful thing that Balaam should be teaching the saints! But, never mind: there is no trouble whatever in the church that does not bring the soul into deeper communion with Christ than anything else could. Then is the opportunity afforded for overcoming the evil within.

The Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches: 7 Lectures, Seven Churches, The Prophetical Addresses to the: Lecture 5

LECTURE 5

I feel, beloved brethren, that the very commencement of this chapter comforts one in a particular manner in connection with the exceeding solemnity of the address to the church of Sardis. I know of nothing more solemn than the point of view from which the Spirit of God, in this address to Sardis, regards the professing church, as to its name, its character, and its responsibility in the world; for, while the address is to the church, the point of view from whence it is looked at is what the Son of God is in His own fullness of blessing; since it ought to be, in the power of divine grace, the expression of His nature and power, from whom its life flows; and it is necessarily addressed to the professing church, according to the professed position it has taken. I feel ever a little difficulty in speaking on the subject, because of the sense of responsibility that presses on me; and I pray the Lord may communicate to you the sense I have (nay, and a much greater sense than I have) of the responsibility connected with it. The church of Sardis was, indeed, in a most solemn condition. Still there is a comfort in the fullness and perfectness of Christ here given for the need of the church; and, when all else might seem to fail, so much the more does Christ bring out that unchangeable fullness which is always there in Him to be depended on.

The Lord's character (which, as I have before said, is usual in these addresses) is adapted to the state of those whom He is addressing-" these things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." It is not said here, as it is in the address to Ephesus, " He that holdeth in his right hand the seven stars "; but " he that hath the seven stars." And, mark, that no word in Scripture is omitted or changed without full meaning. The stars (the angels1) of the seven churches are symbolical representatives of the churches, but considered in those who have a character of authority under Him, who is the head of government. In the address to Ephesus, Christ holds all the authority in His hand (the stars, as I have just remarked, being the symbolical representatives of the whole system of authority-of that active energy which characterizes the churches to Christ's eye, which acts in His name in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks), judging the state of the church, and holding the representatives in His right hand.

But here in Sardis, failure, and even spiritual death, had come in, and characterized the state of the church-" I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead." We have seen how failure and decay had already previously got into the church; but Sardis was, in one point of view, in a worse state than even any before her, having a name to live while she was dead. It was decay of vital power-not the power of evil working, but a morally worn out thing; and consequently the Lord presented Himself to Sardis as having for faith all the fullness2 of the Holy Ghost at His disposal" He that hath the seven Spirits of God "; and the seven stars, all power in the church, were at His disposal also (seven being the symbol of perfection.)

Whatever the failure of the church may be, however it may have coalesced with the world, this remains always true, that the full, divine competency of the Holy Ghost in His various attributes, is its portion, under Him who is the Head of the church and cares for it, and loves it, and watches over it; so that the church is without excuse, on one hand, and the believing saint has a resource on the other. But now that the whole thing had completely failed, that not only God's saints were seduced by the false doctrine of Balaam, and that Jezebel had found a home there, having children born there (as of Zion it shall be said, " This and that man were born in her," so here there were those who had their Christian name and birth-place in the very evil itself): another scene presents itself here after the evil has fully developed itself-a deathful state, though all spiritual energy and authoritative power is there in Christ Himself, with whom they have to do. And much as the fact of all this being still and ever in Christ may condemn the professing church, the precious truth of all power in connection with the Holy Ghost being then, as ever, assuredly in Christ is brought out for the comfort and blessing of the faithful " overcomer." It is his stay in the midst of abounding evil.

Whatever may be the form in which corruption has come in, be it Jezebel or be it Balaam, the Lord says, " I know it all." If death is stamped on the professing church, still Christ says, " I have the seven Spirits of God, and nothing can touch this "; and, therefore, while all is going wrong, we find that He has still all that is needed for the full blessing of the church-" hath the seven Spirits of God." This is not altered a bit, either by the failure of man or by the wickedness of Satan.

In Rev. 4:5, and chap. 5: 6, we have likewise mention of the seven Spirits of God-seven lamps of fire burning; seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, expressive of multiform power and manifold wisdom; so that it is as if the Lord had said, " Here is everything that can produce good, and secure good, and I have it all in My keeping." In Thyatira He had been obliged to teach them to look out for His coming as the only refuge in the midst of evil; and this hope is brought in as the bright and morning star, to light up the soul in the midst of surrounding darkness. Then, in the church of Sardis, where they had a name to live when they were dead, He further comforts the faithful ones with the assurance, that, as to the real source of all strength, there is not any failure. If all outward supply is gone, He is still the same, and now He will make this known to the church as the power to sustain and support the faithful few; but He does not work a miracle for their deliverance. So likewise, we may observe, when Israel set up the golden calf, there was no miracle wrought to meet that failure, but there was spiritual power in Moses, when he put the tabernacle outside the camp.

The prophets in Judah prophesied, but they wrought no miracles, except when the sun-dial of Ahaz returned ten degrees backward as a special sign given to Hezekiah. They testified in order to bring man back to publicly acknowledged truth in a divinely established system, and comfort the hearts of the faithful. But when the whole nation of Israel had openly departed from God under Jeroboam, and at length Baal was set up and worshipped, then God worked miracles by the hands of His servants Elijah and Elisha. So that while in mercy and grace God was always sending testimony after testimony to Judah, but no miracle when open failure came in, His power must be shown to prove that He was Jehovah, in contrast with Baal, which Judah did not deny. Power with corrupt holders of truth would corrupt them more; power as testimony to those gone away is the patient' goodness of God. This is a great principle in the ways of God, and it is of this great principle that I am speaking, rather than of there being miracles.3 The great practical principle is established, that we may always reckon upon God, whatever the failure may be. It is true that we cannot but be sensible of failure, and a deep sense we ought to have of it, while, at the same time, we must never suffer the utter sense of man's failure to dim the eye of faith to the consciousness of Christ's power; it should rather turn more definitely and distinctly to that which can never fail. Thus we can look with calmness on the church's failure, because we look at it from our dwelling in that love which can never fail; but still we must care for it, and deeply feel it, as being dishonoring to the Lord.

Take for instance, the apostle Paul; how entirely he got above the position of the failing Corinthians and Galatians when he got up to the spring of confidence in the Lord. See how shockingly the Corinthians had been going on when Paul wrote to them. There was " such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles." Therefore he had to reprove them, but he looked above their actual state to the source of their life and hope; and, therefore, before he touches upon their evil, he can speak to them of their being " confirmed unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ "; for " God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." So also to the Galatians. When Paul wrote to them he said, " I stand in doubt of you "; for they had got under the law, and,

therefore, Paul asks, must he change his voice-wants to know how he should speak to them; for they were off the Christian ground of grace, and, accordingly, he turns to speak to them according to the law. But when he gets up to Christ, then his heart gets to the spring of confidence-not confidence in them, but about them-and then he could say, " I have confidence in you through the Lord that you will be none otherwise minded." The right state of our souls is to have a just value for, and apprehension of, all that is in Christ, and consequently of all that the church ought to be for Christ, in order to have a deeper sense of its failure, according to that which we see in Christ, of whom it ought to be the faithful and fruit-bearing witness; and then the sense of the failure will augment, and not diminish, our confidence in the Lord Jesus. And this it is that will keep the saint steady and quiet through it all, because our confidence is not in what the church ought to be for Christ, but in what Christ is for it.

Mark, then, the graciousness of the Lord, in the way in which He opens this address to Sardis. Before He touches on their terrible state, He first of all presents Himself as still possessing the plenary power of the Spirit, for the resource of faith; so that, notwithstanding all the failure and evil that had come in, the power and prevalency of the Spirit still remained the same, because it depended not upon the walk of the saint down here, but upon the value of Christ's work above. Just as God spake to Israel of old when they had failed, by the mouth of Haggai the prophet, saying, " According to the word which I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not." And so it is here-" These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." Then He goes on to take up the state of the church-" I know thy works that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead." What a terrible condition is this! It completely portrays what we see all around us-I do not mean only at the present day, but what has actually been the state of the church for the last century and more.

In Sardis, it is not the church as having left her first love, as in Ephesus (although that has been the origin of all that has since followed). Nor is it as Smyrna, suffering under persecution from Satan, who has the power of the world. Nor is it as Pergamos, dwelling in that same world where his throne is, having such as hold the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, a doctrine allowing evil deeds. Nor is it as Thyatira, suffering the prophetess Jezebel to teach and seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Nor has it yet arrived at the state of Laodicea, just ready to be spued out; nor is it like Israel, as the open and positive worshippers of Baal. Grace has still some work to do, and therefore we find it acting here and there. The church of Sardis, as we have seen, had got away from evil doctrine and the actual teaching of corruption; the evil of Sardis was more negative-a dead form without any living power. It has a great name to live, certainly. It is not Jezebel here, nor eating things offered to idols, neither is it yet spued out of Christ's mouth. They had got outward truth, but it was dead, having no living power; they had a certain outward and avowed profession and appearance of Christianity; but, alas! if there was the name to live, there was no power of life. They held the name and doctrine of Christianity; but alas! Christ was not there. Take orthodoxy as it now is and has been for some time past, and is it not just this? Saved from Jezebel, a dead form has come in. And here let us bear in mind what we have before remarked, that, in these addresses to the churches, nothing of that which is put under judgment has any reference to the energy of the Holy Ghost working. The thing that is judged is the use made of these graces and gifts of the Spirit of God.

Take the work of the Reformation as an illustration of this. As to the energy that produced it there was an undoubted work of God's Spirit; and we find with joy what God was doing, and not what He is judging. It is from not seeing this distinction that people get into difficulty. Now, it may be asked, where is the fruit which should have been produced by the privileges brought in at the Reformation, and now so long enjoyed? God lights a candle, not to put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all who are in the house; then God looks to see if it gives forth the light which He has put into it. In the churches, we find a good or a bad state spoken of, but never is the good state named in connection with the Holy Ghost as producing it

" I have not found thy works perfect before God." It was set up complete in all the perfectness that there was in Christ for it; and therefore He looks for that which should answer to it, the perfectness in which it was originally set. Thus the Lord presents Himself as the One having all this perfectness in spiritual power and energy, and is looking for that which answers to it. We might say, " Is it not strange to say their works were not perfect, when we are told they are dead? "

No, for the Lord never can descend below His own measure in dealing with evil, whether in the church or with an individual. If He gives a standard, it is that by which He must judge. The church must be judged according to the resources it has at its disposal. God never goes below this in looking for an answer to what He has done. Therefore we have to ask ourselves whether, as individuals, we are showing to the world the holiness that we are made partakers of, and the love we are the objects of. There are very many who profess Christ, while there are few comparatively who live Christ. There is no charge here of Balaam and his corrupt doctrine, eating things sacrificed to idols, or of Jezebel; but the Lord is looking for life. He looks for works complete, filled up according to the measure of grace with which He has connected the church. If we look at ourselves, dear friends, what can we say? The question is not whether we are producing any fruit at all, but whether the fruits that are produced are fruits meet for Him for whom the ground is dressed. If I till a field and sow it with wheat, and it does not bring forth according to my labors bestowed upon it, I must give it up, and I do not sow it with wheat any more. I am not here talking about the salvation of a soul, but of the Lord's judgment of the results in the saints, in souls already saved.

It is true that God will produce the fruits of every principle of His grace in perfection, when Christ takes His power; but before this He commits it to man. He gave the law to Israel, and they utterly failed respecting it. But Christ says, " Thy law have I hid in my heart." So also of Israel, God will, in the latter days, write the law in their hearts. Now Israel has become " a proverb and a bye-word among all nations," as having been unfaithful; but in the day of Christ's power, when God will produce fruit in perfection and fullness, then " Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the whole world with fruit."

Then take government that was put into man's hand. Nebuchadnezzar was entrusted with power, and we know what became of it. But government will be set up in perfection when " the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." So also the church of God was set up on the earth complete in Christ, to manifest the glory of her absent Head in heaven, and the power of the Holy Ghost conferred upon her. She was the habitation of God through the Spirit. But alas! how miserably has she failed, and what God is looking for are the fruits of grace as a testimony and witness to His grace received. But when Christ " shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe," then the church shall be manifested in glory, and the world shall learn that the church has been loved with the same love wherewith Christ was loved. But now it is a matter of responsibility, and this for each individual if the church fails. It will come to this, as to the professing church, that it will be spued out of His mouth. But, remember, this is not a question of salvation, but of profession before the world.

Take the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was given to produce certain effects. There the adequate fruits were produced. As to the present time, then the inquiry of course is, Is the church of God producing for God fruits which answer to the power of testimony entrusted to it? No, the church as a body is not. Then comes out the individuality-" He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear," and this brings the question home to each one of us, " How far are we individually producing a testimony to God's grace? "-a testimony, I mean, not in accordance with the first fullness of public power manifested in the church, but filling up the measure of what we have individually received, and the spiritual service of a saint, according to Christ's power now; for so God in practice deals with the church, and the grace in Christ is always sufficient for that. When this is the question between the soul and God, surely we shall have to own that this individual measure of grace is not attained to. We may indeed zealously contend for a name; but the question before God is as to power and full fruits of grace in the measure of that which has been received; and if the soul does not come up to that, it is a dreadful thing for it to be resting on a religious reputation, while the works are not perfect before God.

Oh! may the Lord keep us all from resting upon a religious reputation; for of all the terrible things that can befall a saint of God, one of the worst is, trusting to a religious reputation-especially for one who is engaged in ministering, I am sure. Alas! how often we have seen such a person laboring devotedly, diligently, blessed in his labors, gathering others really in truth to Christ, but thus gathering a circle round himself. Self is there, and thus he gets " a name to live," becoming satisfied with the circle he has made, and resting in the fruits produced, and not in Him who is alone the power of life. Thus his usefulness is gone, and he himself stops short of the end. Look now at the direct contrast of this, in the Lord's earthly path. He lost credit, every step He took, with those around Him, because He went on walking with His Father, shining brighter and brighter; till at last men could not bear its brightness, and, as far as they were concerned, put it out on the cross, because those around Him knew not His measure of communion, and could not at all get up to it. Even His very disciples could not come up to the discipleship involved; they also dropped off, as He said, " Ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Thus we see the blessed Lord in man's estimation got lower and lower till they put Him to death, " even the death of the cross."

Then there was Paul. What spiritual energy of faith there was in him! He walked with God in power; but we see that those about him could not attain to the point he had reached; and, therefore, as Paul was advancing, he must necessarily leave them behind him. His path became more and more lonely, and at the end of his course he had to say, " all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Again, " all men forsook me, notwithstanding the Lord stood by me." Paul, out of all he had gathered, had only one person to visit him in prison. Full energy was kept up in Paul, in the power of which he walked with God, while others slipped back; as he says, they were " the enemies of the cross of Christ," " who mind earthly things." And even those who were not this were not keeping up to the point of faith; they lost sight of their heavenly citizenship; they sought their own more than the things of Jesus Christ.

Just in proportion as there is this secret measure of communion in our walk with God, in that which is hourly passing between the soul and God, will be the degree of our isolation. What we have most specially to look to is that all our works be perfect before God, that all our doings be measured with immediate reference to God; and this must necessarily produce a certain degree of isolation. It was thus with Christ: He was always lowly and He was already lonely, yet full of love to all, perfect in affability with every needy soul as with His disciples. It is no matter how we sink in the estimation of others, it will be the necessary consequence of faithfulness; and the reverse of all this is with a great show before the world-just this, " that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," " for I have not found thy works perfect before God." The works are done in reference to man, and not to God. At the same time it is quite a right thing to walk with the saints and to keep and cultivate their affections, although the more faithful individual walk is, the greater the isolation must be, because the fewer there will be who understand it. And yet the nearer to Christ, the greater, of course, will be the grace towards others, as He says, " as I have loved you, that ye also should love one another." Thus in a close walking with God, there will be an abiding sense of His secret favor; but then this personal dependence upon God must lead to isolation. Our path will be a lonely one as Christ's ever was. With all His grace and lowliness, to listen to all, and to serve all, yea even to the washing of our feet, yet He was left alone, though not left of God, as He said, " He that sent me is with me," " the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things which please him."

Now see the consequences of the works not being perfect before God; and this is what I feel to be so solemn in the warning here given: " Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Mark the two points here, " received and heard." Firstly, the grace which it has received, and in which it has been set; and, secondly, the revealed word of God as their rule and guide. Grace has been received, and the word communicated. It is not that which we have not received, but that which we have received, that we are called to consider. The Lord presents the measure of responsibility in these two points, that which the church has received, and in which it has been set, and that which it has heard (the word of God being the alone measure of revealed guidance). God gives us His word to guide us, and grace to walk according to it.

" If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Now it is a very wearying and tiring thing to watch; for one has to watch oneself too, or we are apt to fall asleep. The heart grows tired of being constantly awake to all that is going on. It is impossible to watch if we do not keep close to Christ-if we have not the sense of His watching us, and taking notice of us. We need great watchfulness in active service. Indeed, our every service ought to be connected with God as a matter of individual faith. We may be tried in it. The bush may be very thick, but the object on the other side should be clear. There is a constant tendency to slip away from that clearness of judgment about a thing, which we should have if close to Christ. When judging of a trial in the presence of Christ, the way out of it seems easy; but when we have got into the trial, we do not always see it so clearly. When we are first descending into a valley, the object on the other side, and the direction to be taken, are seen clearly enough; but when we have got into the thicket of the valley, it is not so easy to discern the pathway through the details of the way. We are apt, when we get into the weariness and distraction of the circumstances of the trial, to lose the clearness of apprehension which we had in judging of it in Christ's presence. We all find there is much practical difficulty in seeing as clearly when in the thicket of the valley, as when on the heights with Christ. Our eye must be single to do God's will; and the more humble we are, the more simple we shall be, and thus be guided through by the wisdom of His own will, who sees the end from the beginning, and guides us by His word and Spirit. The largest mind of man that was ever heard of could never discern God's ways, while the " little child " who looks to God has God's wisdom. Every step we take should be marked with the sense of God's approbation. " For the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

" If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come on thee." If there is not this watchfulness in the professing church, how solemn is the result! " I will come on thee as a thief." What a fearful thing when the professing

church, with its great name, is reduced, in God's estimation and judgment, to the level of the world, when it does not come up in its works to the expectation of God! He had not found their works perfect before God, because not according to the privileges given by God. God here says to them, If there be not the answer to what I have given, if there is not watchfulness, I must treat you as the world will be treated. In 1 Thess. 5:2, with regard to the world it is said, " the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." But to the saints it is said, " but ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief; ye are all the children of light and the children of the day." And when He comes who brings in the day, the children of the day will come with Him. They will be, in fact, as the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. " When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory "; " when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe." And, again, " The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

In 1 Thess. 5 the Spirit of God contrasts the world with the church of God; while here in Sardis the Lord contrasts the professing church with the true saints of God, and announces to it the world's portion. Therefore Sardis is addressed as the world; it is not denounced as Jezebel, but as receiving the judgment of what it is in spirit, the world; for if the professing church is not coming up to the measure of what it has " received and heard," this is its portion. If it be not found watching, it is courting in its measure the same judgment as the world. Of course we are not saying that the church of God, which is one with Christ in glory, and whose life is hid with Christ in God, could ever be so treated; but it is an exceedingly solemn thought that the great professing body, with its " great name to live " and a " fair show in the flesh," is waiting for the same judgment as the world. It is the world itself in fact. Then arises this question, How far have your souls realized that all that is going on around us bearing the name of God, while it is not of God-the nominal church, or Christendom as it is called, which is in truth the world, but having this name and position-will be treated as what it really is-the world? Well, then, dear friends, what a solemn fact is this, that we are, in this day in which we live, walking through a scene which must thus be visited, because God has said it, and alas! we know not how soon. I know of nothing more solemn than the identification of the professing church with the world in judgment which is here found.

" Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Here we shall have another important point opened out; for here we shall find the characteristics of what is called the " invisible church." " Thou hast a few names even in Sardis." These " names " here signify " individuals " whom the Lord had counted up and known each one of them by name. " These are they which have not defiled their garments "; they had not gone on with the world, now the professing church had defiled their garments. Sardis is not charged with the seductions of Balaam, or the corruptions of Jezebel, it may be; but she is " minding earthly things " and is " glorying in her shame." Sardis has not kept her garments unspotted by the world, and, therefore, her spot is not " the spot of His children." As Paul said, " even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things." It is the spirit of the world filling the heart as an accepted object, and hence conformity to it in order to walk with it, which is here spoken of. But those who have held by the cross of Christ with undefiled garments " shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

The character of the blessing always answers to the difficulty. They had kept their garments unspotted by the world when down here. Therefore they shall walk with Him in white up there, " and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Mark how individual this is-" his name," so constantly recurring.

The force of the expression, " the book of life," is evidently that of a general registry of profession, taken from the custom of corporations of cities, where a name may be enrolled, the title to which may prove false, giving at the first blush a prima facie title to something, though on investigation it will have to be erased. Those who were written in this book had a profession, " a name to live." This was very different from " being written in the book of life before the foundation of the world "; because God, in that case, had written them there: it was thus the book of the counsels and purposes of God.

" I will confess his name." The Lord will distinguish each one that is His. And in these individuals we see that the invisible church exists amid the wreck of all, and when the visible body is judged, they will escape, and not merely escape, for they will be taken to the Lord before this. So that, when the Lord comes to judge the world, they will come with Him; and the visible church, not answering to the grace, will be treated as the world. There is, therefore, an invisible church, I doubt not; but mark that when the true church is invisible, then the visible church is treated like the world. These churches were called candlesticks, and God had put light in them, not to be put under a bushel, but to be put in a candlestick; to give light to all around. Well, then, is light invisible? If it is, what is invisible light worth? It only merits condemnation. What has been said by men for the last three hundred years is quite true, that there is an invisible church, but then this is the condemnation of that which is visible. Looked at with respect to its public collective testimony for God, does it bear out the precepts of Christ in its conduct and life? No; and, therefore, there has not been in the church the visible testimony lo all the grace, and truth, and blessedness, which is the church's portion in Christ.

We would here point out what very different aspects of the Lord's coming we have presented to us in these addresses. In Thyatira, in the Jezebel state of the church, He turns away the eye from all hope of its restoration as a whole, and turns it to the Morning Star for the comfort of those who, though not of the night, yet feeling that it is the night, are watching for the Morning Star; thus presenting the hope of His coming as a refuge to the faithful overcomer in the midst of abounding evil. Here in Sardis His coming has the character of judgment -" I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come on thee." Sardis, being in a decayed dead state, necessarily brings a judgment on itself; for if the professing church be got into a state like the dead, then it must be treated like the dead. But in Philadelphia, it is quite a different thing; there He addresses a poor, feeble remnant in the midst of apostasy, with the blessed and encouraging hope of His coming quickly-" Behold, I come quickly."

Philadelphia. We have seen the general course of the first of these churches to be declension; then the being drawn away by Satan; then warnings. Here a remnant are comforted. What characterizes the faithful here is, that while they had no strength, they are yet in close connection with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. What characterizes the father in Christ, in John's first epistle, is the knowledge of Him that is from the beginning. So here in Philadelphia, we get a little strength, it is true; but there is no denial of His name. The address to the church, the foundation of the declaration made to it, is connected with Christ, is Himself; it is not a question of power. But when all is going wrong, as in John's epistle, where there were the many Antichrists, still there were those who had that by which they could detect the false one; " for he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Feeling it now to be a kind of hopeless thing to look for any restoration of the church, as far as regards apparent power, the keeping of the word of Christ's patience is what characterizes the church of Philadelphia; and the name of " him that is holy and him that is true " is stamped upon it in a peculiar way. In the way Christ is presented here there is no question of power. as in Sardis, but the unfailing certainty of what He was in His character, and what He has said-" He that is holy,

and he that is true." With these two we can judge everything. When all was going wrong around, they were to keep to the simplicity that was in Christ; as in John's epistle-" This is the true God and eternal life." " Little children, _keep yourselves from idols." They had got eternal life in their souls, and having touched Him and handled Him, and seen Him by faith, they could say who this true One was; and could also say, " this is the Holy One," for He is not only the One who has power, but He is the Holy One.

Remark, too, that the characters of Christ presented here form no part of the original glory of Christ, spoken of in chapter 1, but refer to His moral character, discerned by the saint exercised in faith at the epoch to which the church refers. But the saints here had " kept the word of Christ's patience "; and when the word of God is valued as such, then the character of Christ Himself governs the soul. His precepts become our authority, and Christ Himself personally rules the affections of the heart, and with a single eye the body is full of light. So it was with Mary, when the departure of the Lord drew nigh. The word of God links the soul with Christ as He was, and is; it just gives one a written Christ. See in Matt. 5 " Blessed are the poor in spirit "; and who so poor in spirit as Christ? " Blessed are the pure in heart "; and who so pure as He? " Blessed are the meek "; and who so meek as He? " Blessed are the peace-makers ": He was the great peacemaker, the very Prince of peace.

The first thing, of course, is to have Him as the living Christ for the salvation of the soul; and then, through the written word, we get the spiritual perception of what this Christ is. It is the simple expression of Christ Himself, of Him who was the express image of God; who " was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And when we thus get the Spirit's testimony to Christ, the heart clings to Him as the " holy " and the " true." Thus the Christ found in the word governs the affections, for we dare not and would not be without, or depart from, this written Christ. This living link to a living Christ is the only safeguard against them that would seduce us. A holy Christ in whom we have the truth is the blessed, strong, moral assurance of the soul, when a mixed and lifeless Christianity is powerless against delusion; and when the same causes make the professing church incapable of discerning a plain path, when there is not faith enough to do without the world, and mixture is everywhere, then a holy and true Christ is the assuring guide and stay of the soul.

To Timothy Paul said, " From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and surely there can be no better knowledge to be got than the knowledge of Christ. This was the point in the Epistle of John. The father in Christ " knew him that is from the beginning "; he could tell what the true Christ was; he knew " him that was holy, him that was true." It is not development that is needed, but merely the getting back to the simplicity that is in Christ-to know Him truly that was at first revealed, Him that was from the beginning. Therefore, if my soul is attached to the Christ of the written word, the Christ that I have loved here is the same Christ that I am waiting for to come and take me up there.

The blessed picture that we get here of the Lord Jesus is not like that given in chapter i, with " his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace "-firm, unchanging, a consuming fire in judgment, and now so revealed, and according to what was revealed by the Holy Ghost. But the picture here given of Him is in connection with the moral character given of Him in the written word-" he that is holy and he that is true."

" He that hath the key of David; he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." Christ is not looking for strength in His saints: He enters into His own personal and peculiar service and holds the " key " Himself; and this is our confidence. If raging billows rise in countries around us, and the preaching of the gospel seem to be forbidden, well, it is all in His hand. I might desire that the gospel might be preached in a certain land, and the hindrances may seem to be too many and too great; but my comfort is to know that Christ has the key, and all the divine power of God at His disposal; and it is as in John 1o, " To him the porter openeth," so that when Jesus presented Himself (as in the gospels) none could shut out His testimony. All the powers of earth-the Pharisees, the lawyers, the chief priests, the governors, the Pilates, and the Herods (those foxes)-could not hinder one poor sheep from hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd in the days of His flesh; and so it is now, for Christ is " the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." This is our confidence in preaching the gospel; for, with all the liberty with which we are blessed in this highly-favored country, I could not count upon a single year more, but for this simple promise, " I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it "; and I could go fearlessly into any country, whatever might be the outward circumstances, if I saw that the Lord had set before me an open door.

Of course we must wait the Lord's time to have the door opened; as we see in the case of Paul, he was forbidden to speak in Asia, at one time, and then we find him there for three years afterward, the Lord owning his labors there, so that all Asia (of which Ephesus, where he was gathering a church, was the capital) heard the word of God. Of course we shall have to be content to lean in faith on the arm of Him who holds the key, and in our patience we shall have to possess our souls; for there will always be circumstances to exercise our faith, and God will allow these circumstances to arise, to prove to us that we cannot do without Him. For then it is we find that we have no strength, and that God answers our weakness according to His own strength; because He cannot fail to answer the faith He has given. " I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." This word has often given me great confidence-" no man can shut it." This is such a blessed comfort that if Christ has opened a door, no man, devil, or wicked spirit, can shut it; and although we have not strength even to push the door open, it is open for us. The whole church is weak, as weak as can be, and that in a bad sense, for what faith have we? We hear of a little faith. God shows us His power, as we have heard of in Madagascar. But where is the strength and energy of faith to be heard of amongst us?

" Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation." This stamps our safety and our power. It is Christ's own patience, for He is also waiting for the kingdom, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. We wait as and with Him; but here it is by the word. It is that which is our warrant and our security- the word by which He guides us into the same mind and spirit in which He waits, separated from the world and knit to Him in the same hopes, and joys, and delight, not finding rest till He finds His-the guidance of our mind, by the communicating His, into the thoughts and expectations which He has Himself. Only let us keep fast hold of the word of Christ's patience in these last perilous times. It is our power against the adversary- in the knowledge of Christ Himself, not in ecclesiastical power, but as holy and true, waiting apart from the world, as He is, and keeping His word, and belonging to Him, so that He takes us out of the hour of temptation that hangs over the world, and the open door of service is ours meanwhile in spite of all.

For, thus associated with Him, we have His own portion. Not being in spirit dwellers upon earth, but waiting with Him, He does not make us pass through that hour of temptation which is to sift out those who have their home here, confounding by the power of the enemy and the tribulation of God the men of this world, and making the world, clung to by any of His, too great a torment to cling to any longer. All this the Philadelphian saint escapes; he can look straight up to the heaven and heavenly Christ he belongs to; and the heart associated with Him knows that He will not fail his heart, but as soon as He rises up to take His place and power towards the world, will take him to be with Him,

according to the hope He has given him. Only let us keep simply to the written word of God, then we may defy all the power of our adversaries (not that we would be adversaries to them, God forbid!) Only let there be in the heart the consciousness of Christ's approbation, and that closeness of heart to God, which takes God's word for a guide because it is His, and then there will be the power of Christ, the strength of Christ made perfect in our weakness. That which characterizes the true saints at this present time is the written word of God, as bringing Christ's character and name as truth and holiness into the heart; and thus walking, in fellowship and communion with " Him that is holy and him that is true," they will be safe.

" Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Here we get those who have an opposite character; and the Lord speaks very plainly, He does not spare them a bit. They are the synagogue of Satan. What did these Jews pretend to? All that which externally gave them a religious title to govern, to command, in the truth:—antiquity, and ordinances established of God, as they really had been in the case of the Jews, and the proof that they were the true and only people of God, the priesthood instituted of God. They had the pretension to be God's competent administrators of His blessings, which none else were; they had zeal for God, possession of His oracles. All else but themselves were without these distinctive privileges. Where else was eternal life to be found? When Christ's authority is owned in the heart, then this word comes in, " We write unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." If God has given us eternal life in Christ, we do not want those who pretend to be the exclusive administrators of it; and we cannot let anything come in and separate between us and Him; we cannot go away from Christ, and we have got the true Christ in the word, and we cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard. Him who would lead me elsewhere I can easily detect as of the synagogue of Satan. They may prosper now: I will wait with Christ, keeping that word which teaches me from Him and with Him to wait till He comes and sets up the blessing and the glory.

But if God has given you eternal life, then do not you dispute with these of Satan's synagogue, as if they had any title from God (they have none); but judge ye whether ye are to obey them or God. We have " Him that is holy and him that is true "-" and the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." They were not to contend with this synagogue of Satan, and though they had but little strength and were of no reputation, yet in patience they were to possess their souls, because Christ will yet manifest His love to them before their adversaries. The synagogue of Satan was a religion of the flesh, which rested in outward things-in all that nature could claim as religious-works, ordinances, and the like, assuming and occupying the place of the Jews in Paul's time; and it is spiritually the same now. But " I will make them know that I have loved thee ": the Greek marks with emphasis the " I " and " thee." Then the question resolves itself into this, Is Christ sufficient for me? Is Christ's approbation sufficient motive to govern my conduct? If Christ's approbation be not sufficient to satisfy a soul, that soul can never walk aright.

" Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast " (that is, "the word of my patience"). I am waiting, and you must wait; Christ is expecting till His foes be made His footstool. Instead of taking our ease, we must be waiting till He come in, just as He always waited till His Father came in, and as He does now till His Father makes His foes His footstool. I would mark here how emphatically the word " My " comes in throughout this address. It is the practical identification of the saint with " him that is holy and him that is true." Waiting with Him in rejection from the hands of those who had all the ordinances, and antiquity for them, we shall be sharers with Him in glory. The word

" My " is especially connected with everything in the glory. You have been weak in testimony down here, but you have kept the word of My patience, and you shall be a " pillar " of strength in the temple of My God, I will write on you the name of My God, the name of the city of My God... which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. This identification with Christ in patience, and Him in everything, is of the deepest interest and instruction.

The Lord give us to walk in the power of the Spirit with our hearts fixed on Christ as revealed as the holy and the true, keeping the word of His patience, that so His approbation may be our everlasting reward. May He keep us separate from the world upon which He is coming in judgment!

How great the contrast between expecting that which is hanging as a terror over a person's head, and knowing Christ in such a way, having Him so completely the whole object of our desires and affections that when He says, " Surely I come quickly," the immediate response of our hearts may be, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches: 7 Lectures, Seven Churches, The Prophetical Addresses to the: Lecture 6

LECTURE 6

We only touched a little upon the general features of the church of Philadelphia last evening, just so much as was needful to connect it with the preceding church of Sardis. We will, therefore, now turn again, the Lord helping us, to consider more particularly the details of the church of Philadelphia; and in so doing, we would notice, in the first place, that the most prominent feature in this church of Philadelphia is, that it is one of special blessing to meet a special need. For, after all the display of terrible evil through which we have had to pass, in the previous condition of the churches, now that we have reached Philadelphia, we find it to be all mercy and blessing.

It is very blessed to observe, that however poor and feeble God's people may be, even though the faithful ones be reduced to a remnant of individuals, He never forgets them. His eye is ever upon them to give them out of His own resources, according to what they need and when they need, at the time that surrounding things are darkest. When both the church and the world have arrived at a state of felt darkness, then the few who are faithful have the most " light in the Lord." For the life of faith is always nourished and sustained by the faithful grace of Christ, according to the power of that which draws upon it-according to the difficulties through which it has to pass.

It is another question whether the Lord's people are to be used in testimony by Him in time of failure; this will be according to His wisdom. We see this exemplified (as we have before remarked) in Israel; the failure of the golden calf was met by inward spiritual power in Moses putting the tabernacle outside the camp. And when the open and avowed worship of Baal prevailed, then God raised up Elijah and Elisha with great outward manifestation of power; but then the seven thousand faithful ones were hidden of God. The Lord may not choose to put the outward

honor of testimony upon that which has failed. Still He gives the needed grace and inward power of life to sustain the individual soul; and this, as regards the saints now, flowing from the Head in glory for the nourishment of the body on the earth, can never fail. Thus, as regards gifts in the church, for instance, those which were for signs (" sign-gifts " as they are sometimes called, and a testimony to the world, signs being for those which believe not, as " tongues," " gifts of healing," etc.), these may be all gone; but never can those gifts be removed which flow down from the Head to sustain the members of the body; for " no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church."

In the epistle to the Ephesians, where the church is so specially brought out as the body Of Christ, we find the gifts for the church spoken of as being " for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Here we have not a word about the sign-gifts, while in Corinthians we have " gifts of healing," divers kind of tongues," " interpretation of tongues," etc. Thus we see in Scripture two characters of gifts distinctly marked out: first, the sign-gifts, as in Corinthians, which were public signs attached to the church for outward testimony, whereby to attract an unbelieving world; secondly, those gifts which flow from the Head for the nourishment of the body. This nourishment must ever remain. It may come in the way of outward testimony, or direct from Christ Himself in the way of grace; but there must always be this supply from the Head. This is just what we get brought out in the Philadelphian church; for that which characterized it was weakness-only a little power, but a much greater nearness to Him who is power, a greater degree of affection to the Lord, more intimacy of communion with Him, and in the promises made to it a much more definite identification with Himself.

Weakness is that which characterized the church of Philadelphia, but then it was without reproach from the Lord. And we must ever remember this, that though God may give an outward display of power, such as gifts of healing, tongues, and the like, as a testimony to the world, or these may all have come to an end, yet at all times, either with or without this outward manifestation of power, the sense of weakness is competent strength if mixed with faith. There may be trouble of heart along with this sense of weakness without unbelief. There was this sense of the surrounding sorrow in the Lord Jesus. " Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." But thus we see the sorrow was the very thing which immediately linked Him with His Father.

But, alas! in us there is too often such a getting into communion with the sorrow itself, such a turning of our souls to the thoughts of sorrow, as to lead to the distrusting God's competency to meet it. For, instead of saying, " In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul," we are turning about in the multitude of our thoughts to think what is to be done, and thus looking at and occupying ourselves about circumstances, or what we find within us, so as to keep God out altogether; but this was never the case with the Lord Jesus. For the moment the hour of sorrow appeared before His soul, the immediate cry was, " Father, save me from this hour." But if we are thinking about our own weakness in any other way than to lead us to immediate dependence upon the strength of God, God with us and God for us, it is unbelief.

It is not, moreover, a sense of the greatness of God's gifts and revelations to us in which our strength lies. For signs and miracles do not give inward strength; they may confirm His word to us in times of trial, but can never impart inward strength; and it is of importance clearly to understand this. Take, for instance, the case of Paul, who was caught up into the third heaven, and heard there things which it was not possible for him to utter. An amazing thing this, and doubtless it was a kind of back-ground for Paul's soul to rest upon in his trials, his having been in the third heaven. But it did not give him inward strength. On the contrary, the flesh, without God's overruling care, would have been puffed up, and this is not strength; but when he got something that made him sensible of his own weakness, then strength from God could come in. And so it is with us: our hearts are so treacherous, and our flesh so wicked, that if not watched against, we should abuse everything that the Lord makes known to us. We need not stop here to inquire what Paul's " thorn in the flesh " was, although it is often made the subject of much fruitless inquiry, out of mere curiosity; but this we would remark, that each one of us will have a different thorn according to the danger we are in. Thus much we know from Gal. 4:13, 14, that it was something which tended to make him despicable in the flesh, thus producing sensible weakness in his ministry. And, therefore, Paul cried thrice to the Lord to remove it; to which the Lord replied, " My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul must realize this sense of weakness in order to learn where real strength lies; and then he can glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him; as he says, " When I am weak, then am I strong."

There is always strength in looking to God; but if the mind rest upon the weakness otherwise than to cast it upon God, it becomes unbelief. Difficulties may come in. God may allow many things to arise to prove our weakness; but the simple path of faith is to go on, not looking beforehand at what we have to do, but reckoning upon the help that we shall need, and find when the time arrives. The sense that we are nothing makes us glad to forget ourselves, and then it is that Christ becomes everything to the soul. There is real strength in pursuing the simple path of obedience in what we may have to do, whatever the trial may be. So it was with David when he had to fight. " The Lord, that delivered me out of the paw of the bear, and out of the paw of the lion, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." It was no matter to David whether it was the lion, the bear, or this giant of the Philistines; it was all the same to him, for in himself he was as weak in the presence of one as the other; but he went on quietly doing his duty, taking it for granted that God would be with him. This is faith. Mark the contrast with this in the unbelief of the spies sent by Moses to spy out the land. They trembled and said they were but as grasshoppers in the sight of their enemies, thus quite forgetting what God was for them, and making it a question between themselves and the Anakims, instead of between the Anakims and God. But where there is a simple reference to the Lord, then " I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." When trouble comes in, we must not be looking at ourselves, but, knowing that we are nothing but weakness, simply look to the Lord as everything in the way of strength for us.

The case of Philadelphia was one of decided weakness, but faithfulness; there may be great apparent power and yet weakness itself. As the Holy Ghost says in 1 Corinthians, there may be the speaking with the tongues of men and angels, the understanding of all mysteries, and all knowledge, and yet there may be, at the same time, the most perfect weakness, because all this was not done in communion with God. There is nothing more dangerous than to have the outward manifestation of power going beyond the inward association and communion of soul with God; the life within must be equal to the outward display of power. We have lately alluded to this in the case of Elijah.

" These things saith he that is holy, he that is true." Here in Philadelphia we have the Lord in His moral character, and not in the character of personal power as the Son of God, but as the " holy and the true," presenting Himself as a standard of judgment as to everything inconsistent with Himself, and suiting Himself in grace to the condition and need of His faithful ones, and by His truth giving a means of judgment, and security of heart and confidence to the saints. And we also find Him disposing of means in favor of the church, in such a way that, if He opens a door, none can shut it, or if He shuts a door, none can open it. Thus there are the two things: He is the holy and the true, to those who trust

in Him; and He has also, not here indeed the display of power, but the key of power (as Jehovah said of Eliakim to Shebna in Isa. 22:22: " The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open "). So that, where there is this weakness, He encourages the church to look to Himself as the holy and the true, and trust Him; and where there is this resting on His title to open and shut, and this trust in His Person, and conformity to His character, the church is perfectly secure, no matter what may happen. Let all the power of man or Satan do their worst, if I am resting in Christ, who is perfectly true, and He has opened a door, neither man nor devil can shut it.

How analogous is this position of the Philadelphian church to that of Christ when He was on the earth! Everybody sought to shut the door against Him; Pilate, Herod, Scribes, Pharisees, and the whole nation of the Jews were all trying to shut the door against Christ. Christ, like the Philadelphian church, was in the midst of an order of things which God had once instituted, but which had entirely failed; for in Christ's time there was no ark, no Urim and Thummim, no Shekinah (the glory of God's presence in the temple). All that had really constituted the sensible display of power and testimony was gone, and, instead of Jehovah having a throne in Jerusalem, they themselves had fallen under Gentile power and were slaves to man's throne. And hence arose the exceeding subtlety of the question the Jews put to our Lord. " What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not? " If the Lord had answered No, it would have been the denial of God's chastisement for their sins; and if He had said Yes, then it went to the denial of His title as Messiah. But (the Lord perceiving their wickedness), His reply to them amounted to this, " You have brought yourselves under this dominion because of your sins, and therefore now you must submit to its authority." Not only " the powers that be are ordained of God," and as such we submit to them; but in Israel's case it would have been denying God's chastisement upon them for their sins (as it is said, " we are slaves this day because of our sins ").

So the Lord Himself submitted to paying the temple tribute. But though Israel, as a body, failed in their faithfulness to God, yet God could not fail in His faithfulness to them, for His Spirit remained among them, as we learn in Haggai; and therefore we find there was a little remnant in the Annas and Simeons, who were waiting for redemption in Israel (as it is said in Malachi, " They that feared the Lord spake often one to another "). Thus we see it was a condition of thorough darkness, and when He who was the Light comes in, He is at once rejected. Well, what then? Was the door shut to Him? No: " to him the porter openeth." Christ came in at the door, not, like all the pretenders that came before Him, climbing up some other way; but while working in divine power Christ came in by God's own appointed way, and no man could shut it. He is become God's appointed way to us; He said of Himself, " I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

Whatever links our position with Christ, as an example and pattern, is in truth a blessing to us; for was there ever one that went through all with such unfailing, lowly faithfulness to God as He did? Note the contrast of His lowly path with that of Elijah's; and what do we see? Elijah was going on ministering with great outward power, bringing down fire from heaven to destroy the prophets of Baal, and thinking himself to be the only one that was left that was true to God; whereas God had seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, whom Elijah had not found out. Christ was content to be nothing in a world where man was everything and God was shut out. He was content to be treated as the very offscouring of the earth; and yet, at the same time, there was not a single lost sheep of the house of Israel that His voice did not reach as the voice of the good Shepherd (let them be the vilest of sinners, a woman of Samaria, an adulteress, or a publican), that His eye did not discover. Thus, in virtue of His very humiliation, He puts those who now have but this " little strength" into the very same place which He Himself took, and then, as the porter did for Him, He opens the door for them, which none can shut.

We are waiting for the glory: " the glory thou hast given me I have given them "; and while thus waiting we have to pass through that which has " Ichabod " written on it (the glory hath departed). The testimony of this dispensation in its public power is gone, never to be recovered. What the Lord is pressing upon them is, that they are not to suppose that the evil, such as that of Thyatira and Sardis, can be put in order; but He says, " Behold, I come quickly! hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown "; that is, keep the word of My patience till I come. Thus we find ourselves in circumstances analogous to Christ; for when the Lord says, " Behold, I come quickly," it is to the end that we may get into greater likeness to Christ's position, and although trying and humbling, yet one of blessing, finding ourselves just in the same position which Jesus took, with the same promise-an open door which none can shut. This is present faith; it is not much strength that we want: the thing most needed is greater conformity to the position of Christ.

Observe another thing peculiar to this church of Philadelphia. The Lord does not set about canvassing their works, but leaves the heart of these poor weak ones satisfied with the consciousness that He knows them. To the other churches it was not so; He notices the character of their works. To Sardis He said, " I have not found thy works perfect before God." But it is sufficient for us that He knows our works. 0 what a comfort it is, for if we had to look for perfection, as in Sardis, we should find it very troublesome to give in the account. The mixture of things, the little faith, would dismay us. In fact, none of our works have answered to the grace received. There is plenty of activity, there is much that man may approve, but taking the general character of service, how difficult to find that which God can approve! Then again, if we get occupied with the state of things in the world around us, and in the church of God itself, our hearts would sink within us, did we not fall back on this most blessed truth, that Christ knows all about it.

But then does He say that they have nothing? No; He says, "Thou hast kept my word." That which characterized Christ must be the characteristic of the church of God. Christ could say, " Thy word have I hid in my heart "; and this is especially the characteristic of faithfulness in the last days. Paul in writing to Timothy says, " In the last days perilous times shall come," and there would be a terrible form of godliness without power; for even then the mystery of iniquity had come in, " and evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." But the safeguard is, " but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures "-the plain written word, what we call the Bible, read from his youth. Security would not be in the manifestation of outward power, nor yet in miracles, but simply in the written word. This was the instrument of blessing; this the recognized authority with Timothy. Of course the grace of God was needed for his conversion. I refer to this now, as the keeping close to the word is the special security of these latter days (namely, the special authority of the word of God itself, just what Timothy, as a child, found in the Scriptures); and added to this, of course with Timothy, was that which he had learned from the apostles, equally inspired, and which was thus a known immediately-divine authority in a person " of whom," says the apostle, " you have learned it," and which since has become the written word to us. The written word of God is where all our security lies through grace.

The Lord does not say " You have strength," but " You have kept my word "; and then further He does not say " You have known me in this or that character," but " You have not denied my name." The Lord's name means always the revelation of what He is; as if He be called Christ, He is the Anointed One. The Lord is here saying, that as you have stuck fast to Me as revealed, now I will make them which have a false name and pretenses " to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Here we get the two characters contrasted; and

also mark the emphasis on the word " My ": it is Christ's word upon which I am called to rest; " My word" -the word of Christ Himself, to come in personal communion with Christ Himself-not even the church's word. Suppose, for instance, I take the church's word, that is, to assume that the church has authority; but if I take Christ's word, then I have the authority of Christ Himself; and it is by the word of Christ that I must judge everything about the church itself. And the word of Christ connects us with Christ, His name and Person; and these are the two things which are especially essential for us to have, to enable us to walk contrary to the seductions which we know are peculiar to the last days. It is seductive power which characterizes these times, " evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." " These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you."

In speaking in a general way of the character of the times, we look for seductive power. There will be a distinct and definite Antichrist, who will show it in another way, but " even now there are many Antichrists "; therefore we have " earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." If he, whose coming is after the power of Satan, with signs and lying wonders, shall prevail against those who " receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved," we have need to hold fast that which will guard us against him who will come in as an angel of light; but it is those who have not received the love of the truth who fall into his snares. And this safeguard we have in the word of Christ Himself- keeping the word of His patience, and not denying His name. It must be an individual thing, for seductive power, having come in, marks the times in which we live to be " perilous times," not by open persecution and the like; but as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so our minds are in danger of being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. And what have we to deliver us from this? Is it the outward manifestation of power, miracles, etc.? No, we have no outward power wherewith to meet Satan, we are weakness itself" thou hast a little strength "; but our safeguard is in this, each soul individually for itself, holding fast the written word of Christ, and not denying His name.

It seems not much to say of them, " Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name," for there was not much done by them. But, dear friends, when the seductive power of evil was there it was saying everything of them; when all that was going on was to the setting aside of the written word, they kept it; and when everything went to the denial of Christ's name, they did not deny His name. That which is a great thing in God's sight is, not the calling down fire from heaven as Elijah did, but the being faithful amidst surrounding unfaithfulness. So likewise it did not seem to be saying much for the seven thousand who did not conform to the gross act of worshipping Baal, merely to say that they had " not bowed the knee to Baal," but it was, in truth, saying everything for them, because they were surrounded by all those who did bow the knee to Baal. So likewise the church of God was at first set up in power, but tares were plentifully sown among the wheat, and that which marks out the faithful ones is simply this, that when the seductive power of evil comes in, they are not seduced and led away by it. It is not in the manifestation of outward power, but simple faithfulness in walking with God in the midst of evil. Thus in the church of Philadelphia there was faithfulness of walk which gave them inward power, although no outward display of power.

" Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." Here we find this individual faithfulness in a secret walk with God, contrasted with those who cling to something established, where there was abundance of form, a fair show in the flesh, boasting themselves to be Jews, and attempting to set up again that which used to be the outward characteristic of the people of God, not seeing that " new " thing which God had now set up, and which now puts the heart to the test. They do not reject the. word of God (the Jews did not either); but it is not God's word that governs them. The Jews received the Scriptures, but they rejected Christ, and killed Him; as Jesus Himself said, " They will put you out of the synagogue." Nor was it without the notion that they were serving God in doing so: " The time cometh that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service." But this was pure rejection of the light God sent: " And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor me." Any old truth which has gained credit in the world so as to be accounted orthodox, fails to put the heart to the test. It accredits nature: one is esteemed for it. If I can take religion and accredit myself with it, instead of having the heart put to the test by it in the exercise of faith, I may be quite sure that it is not the religion of God. Though it may be the truth as far as it goes, it is not faith in God. That is what this synagogue of the Jews were doing. They were setting aside Christ's name and Christ's word, for that which could be rested upon where there was no heart for Christ. Tradition, ordinances, ancestry, etc., were the things they loved, and not the word of Christ for themselves. It is quite true that the Jews had been God's people; but they had rejected and trampled under feet the name of Christ. And this is what makes all the difference; for now that Christ has been manifested what God is looking for is faithful obedience to His Son. Faithful adherence to Christ now is everything.

" I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." God did not own these pretenders to religious antiquity as His people. All they would get was just to know that Christ had loved this poor despised remnant: " To know that I have loved thee! " See now what the heart has to be satisfied with-not the present acknowledgment from those who profess to know God, while in works they deny Him, but the calm, settled confidence that Christ loves it. This it is which puts the heart to the test. If you want present enjoyment, bright pictures set before the mind, taste gratified, imagination fed, men gained, something of " reverend antiquity "; Christ is not in any of these things. " He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever "; and He Himself is the Truth-" holy and true." And if we have the love of Jesus as a present thing in our souls, we have all we want in Him.

There are plenty of people asking, What is truth? With such these pretensions may have weight. The synagogue of Satan may be religion, ancient, and reverend, full of gorgeous attractions, and what has authority over the flesh (and accepted for us by those who, like Pilate, asked What is truth? and then crucified Jesus, who is the Truth, to please the priests of the day). The character of these last days is just this, that men are always seeking, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. I have no need to be asking, what is truth, if I have it; what a man seeks he has not got. A man that is always hunting after truth acknowledges by his actions that he has not got it. Christ said, I am the truth; He is the center of all truth, and is the ground of everything that connects us with God. An infidel will raise doubts about everything, but establishes nothing; but we want something that is certain. The moment we have the Person of Christ, we have the Truth: " no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Do I want to know what God is? what man is? I get in Christ a perfect picture of what God is to man, and what He is as a man to God. It is all in Christ: of course we have to advance in the knowledge of it. The heart that has Christ wants not the synagogue of Satan; the heart that has received His testimony has set to his seal that God is true. The soul knowing this is in the simplest way kept from evil. I have got grace too as well as truth-" Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

When I was living in a lie, it was grace that brought the truth to my mind; and what can a soul want more? It has sorrow indeed, by reason of the defiled place through which it is now passing; but there is no more uncertainty about its portion, it has got all in Christ. There is nothing wanting to add to the secret blessing. " I will make them to come and worship before thy feet " (that is, in the sense of doing homage) " and to know that I have loved thee." We know it now, not as deserving it indeed, for it is all of grace; but we have the present enjoyment of it

through Christ's presence. We know that love of Christ which passes knowledge indeed, and the Father's love too; as He says, " I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." The world does not know it now, but in that day the world shall know that the Father loved us as He loved His Son. When the heart gets hold of this love of Christ to it, it rests there; it is satisfied with the present enjoyment of Christ's love, although those around know nothing of the approbation it conveys to the heart. The Lord is now in various ways weaning our hearts from everything around us, in order that we may find, in the testimony of His personal love to us, that which strengthens our faith, settles the conscience, and guides the heart. Christ says, " I am the door," and that is the warrant for the sheep following Him out. In the time of Christ there was the Jewish order of things which God had set up; and there was no warrant for getting out of this Jewish system until Christ went out; but the heart, drawn and attached to Christ, had the special warrant of going after Him outside the established system-" following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

In this church of Philadelphia we have the promise which met the hope which the faithful had of being with Christ in glory. Identification with Him in His position connects them with Himself, and with the word of His patience. They had not all the professing church of one mind with them; and they were not yet enjoying the full result of His love (not having Christ personally and fully present with them, I mean); and if Christ's love is to be the guide of my conduct, what the heart wants is, that Christ should be with it, for if we love a person we surely want to be with him But having Christ in our hearts, we are keeping the word of His patience. Such is a trying, sifting, purging, exercising time, no doubt, but we must wait. And mark, further, how this blessed identification and connection with Himself is kept up all through, as it is not simply the word of patience, but " My patience." And why " My patience "? Because Christ is still waiting (see Psalm He); and it is this which determines all our conduct, for if Christ is waiting we must wait also. Christ has to wait in a state of expectancy, so to speak, in the exercise of patience, for the Father's time; and it is in this sense, I doubt not, that He is said not to know the time which the Father hath put in His own power. Christ has done all that was needed for His friends to present them to God, and is set down at the right hand of God, " expecting till his foes be made his footstool." Christ is waiting until He gathers in all His friends before He does, as He says, His " strange work " on the earth, in dealing with His foes. And hence this word of " My patience " is just what is needed, for we are waiting for that day of which Christ tells us (John 14), " I will come again and receive you unto myself."

We see all creation groaning around us, waiting for that day; and we too groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the body; but all is in disorder till then. Where are the Jews, " still beloved for the fathers' sake "? They are as vagabonds and wanderers upon the face of the whole earth, without priest, without teraphim, without anything, as a teil tree and an oak when it has cast its leaves, though the Lord is working among them. If I look at the world all is sin and misery. If I look at every created thing it is groaning. Look at what calls itself the church: the universal cry is, " Who will show us any good "-who is satisfied with anything? I do not speak thus in the bad sense of dissatisfaction; but there is nothing on which the soul can rest. It is no matter: take whatever system you will. The general feeling is, that all the foundations of the world are out of course. The raven indeed may go and light upon some dead floating carcass; but the dove can find no rest for the sole of her foot, save in the ark. And what have we in the midst of the dense darkness of the night on which to rest our souls? Nothing but the certain expectation of the coming of the bright and morning Star. How long will Christ be waiting till He can deal in judgment, and when can He do this? When He has got His friends with Him, then He begins to act in the character of Judge, not indeed that He will at once cut them all off, but then it is that He will take to Himself His great power. What He is specially waiting for is, that those who have His portion should be with Himself and as Himself. We are predestinated to be conformed to His image. " He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied," when He gets His bride with Himself and as Himself. If the mighty man, the mystic man, the man-child of Rev. 12 is to act, He must first be complete (of course He is so, essentially so, in Himself, but as Head over all things to the church which is His body). The head and the body must be united before He can act as having this title before the world; because the mystic man as a whole cannot take it until the church is. taken up to Him. For not until then-until the church, the body, is united to the Head, Christ, in heaven-is the mystic man in that sense complete; and therefore, the church must be taken up before Christ can come in judgment.

What is the great hindrance to the full blessing of the church now? All from the beginning have failed: Adam, man before the flood, Noah, man under law. Then take Christianity- how have the tares been sown among the wheat! Priesthood, through the influence of Satan, taking the place of Christ, and our union with Him. After this-summed up in the final apostasy, the acting of judicial power to set aside the evil begins. The first act of power, when the mystic man is complete, will be to cast Satan and his angels down (Rev. 12:9), to cast them out of heaven; and they are never seen there any more at all, but they are cast down into the earth; and then the devil has great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time; and, in his great rage, he stirs up all things in his full character of adversary against the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Lord will come with His saints to execute judgment upon the earth. He must set things to rights by removing the evil. And as soon as His enemies are made His footstool, then He brings in the fullness of blessing. But we must keep in mind that the judgment is consequent upon the association of the church with Christ. The mystic man must be complete, in that sense of it, before He can execute judgment. Then Christ takes an entirely different character. Until He takes us up into the glory, He is presented as a Savior (and even then, there will be doubtless-after the church's removal-a saved remnant). But then the acceptable time is ended; and then in " righteousness he doth judge and make war." And when He comes forth thus, we shall fully understand why it is the word of His patience now; for till then, till He take unto Him His great power and reign, we are linked with Him in heart and mind in the word of His patience; and the blessing of this to us is our association with Christ Himself, the perfect linking up with Christ in all things. As a Man (not at all touching the divine glory of His Person, but as taking the official character of a servant) Christ has to wait until God in His good pleasure puts all things under His feet; and this, I doubt not, as I have said, is the meaning of the words-" of that day knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father." But thus linked up with Christ, and having His present love as the satisfying portion of the soul, we had rather wait and have it with Him, that have it before Him. Thorough association with Christ Himself is the proper character of the church of God; for it is not merely that it is blest, but that it is associated with Him who blesses. We are His bride: this is our proper place; and whenever we descend from this, we get away from the full power of God's thoughts of love about us and about what He has made Christ to be for us.

Whatever is said of Christ in the day of glory, we find the church is associated with Him in it all-in His Melchisedec character, for instance, the highest place in authority as King, and the nearest in worship as Priest: we also are made kings and priests. Eve was associated with Adam in the dominion; but there was nothing in the whole creation which could have had this place. As it is written, " for Adam there was not a help-meet found for him "; but when Eve, as the bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, was brought to him he could say, " This is now [now, this time, for that is the force of the original], bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." There was a help meet found for him. This is equally true of the Lord and the church, for He can say, " now this is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," and can rejoice and delight in the production of His own love.

The Lord forbid that we should sink down from this our true place; and may He give unto us a deep and abiding sense of our being thus linked up in full blessed association with Himself; for the heart of Christ could not be satisfied without it, and neither should ours. It is not a question of our worthiness (for in ourselves, as in flesh, we are vile sinners), but of Christ's affection. True humbleness is not to think evil of ourselves, but not to think about ourselves at all. But, mark, it is a much harder thing to forget self, than even to have evil thoughts about self. If we are not humble, we must be humbled.

" Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee," etc. The Lord says, If I own you as keeping " the word of my patience," and not as having any strength, but as in connection with myself, then " I will keep thee," etc. Thus He connects us with Himself, a poor feeble folk though we be, like the conies who were but a feeble folk, yet made their nest in the rock. " I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Now as regards the consequences, what a comfort is here! It was not a question of strength at all, but of being kept from a terrible time that was coming, " to try them that dwell upon the earth." These last words describe the moral condition of a class.

Do you suppose that God takes pleasure in afflicting His His people? No, in truth He does not want to put you into temptation; but if you have got into a position in which you are mixed up with these dwellers on the earth, upon whom the hour of temptation is coming, you must be dealt with to be delivered from that on which that dreadful hour is coming. The gospel is preached now, and is taking out souls from the world; and the whole thoughts, feelings, desires, and affections of the saints should be looking out for the day of glory. And if they have got into Christ's place of patience, they do not want sifting as the world does; but if they are mixed up with the world, they must be sharers in the troubles of the hour of temptation which is coming to try those who dwell upon the earth, or practically sifted before to be rescued from it. A time is coming when the beast will blaspheme those that dwell in heaven, but he cannot touch them. When we know our heavenly character, it makes us strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, instead of dwelling here, and seeking our portion here; but those who are dwellers here must come into this hour of temptation which is coming to try those who dwell on the earth. And mark here, that this is a distinct thing from the tribulation spoken of in Matt. 24 That time of trouble is confined to Jerusalem; as it is said in Jeremiah, " it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." But here, this is a time of trouble, " which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Those who have kept the word of Christ's patience now, He will keep from that time. If the Lord is now getting fruit from them in a way which this temptation is intended to produce, then there will be no need for them to be tried by it.

But now, see how He encourages them: " Behold, I come quickly," as if He should say, " You must go on " bearing My lot in patience, and in the cross too, if you will share My lot and glory; but " I come quickly." It is not His coming, as presented to Sardis, as a thief in the night; but what Christ would press upon the church now is, that His return is a speedy thing. He does not tell them the moment, but puts His coming before them as their comfort, joy, and hope, and thus fixes the heart upon Himself; as it is not so much that He is coming quickly, but that it is Himself that is coming, " I, Jesus," etc. etc. Oh! if the heart has tasted God's love, what comfort it is after all to rest in Himself, as at the close of this book. After Christ has led the mind of the church through those things which He is going to do on earth, then He brings back the heart of the church to Himself-" I, Jesus."

That which characterizes the church of Philadelphia is its immediate connection with Himself; it is Christ Himself who is coming. It is neither knowledge nor prophecy that can satisfy the heart; but the thought that Jesus is coming to take me to Himself is the blessed hope of one who is attached to Him by grace. Prophecy concerns Christ's coming to the earth; but my going to Christ is the proper and blessed hope of one united to Christ by faith. I solemnly respect and reverence God's warning about coming judgment, etc.; but it is not a matter of affection. God's purposes about Jerusalem, Babylon, etc., of which prophecy speaks, are most important and instructive to the mind; but the affections are not drawn out by knowing about the doom of Babylon, and Antichrist. I love Christ; therefore I long to see Him. But prophecies of coming judgment do not connect the spirit and heart with the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Then we have this warning: " Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown?' Oh! may the Lord give us to keep His word, and to be looking for Him as a present thing. If the devil could take away the hope of the Lord's coming as a present thing, this would be taking away our hope and crown. No man or devil can take away anything from us, if we have but that clear sense of faith which connects us with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as a present thing. To lose this is to lose spiritual power; and anything that robs us of spiritual power in our association with Christ, is to rob us of present blessing, and of that which is the path towards our crown. And, beloved brethren, we are now going through every kind of thing that is likely to rob us of our crown- everything which puts faith in a coming Jesus to the test, and calls it in question.

In the case of the ten virgins, they all slumbered and slept; the wise were as fast asleep as the foolish, and at midnight, when the cry was made, " Behold, the Bridegroom cometh " they all rose and trimmed their lamps. There was no difference in this respect; but the one had the oil of the Spirit, the other not; and between the cry going forth and the actual coming of the Bridegroom, there was plenty of time for the lamps to be going out if not supplied with oil; and hence the manifest difference between the virgins was in the supply of oil which they had. If the first thought in the hearts of the foolish virgins had been the Bridegroom Himself, they would have been thinking of the light that He would want when He came; but they were occupied with other things, satisfied with merely keeping company with the virgins. The dress, and the lamps without the oil, would suffice to place them among the company; but alas! without the oil they could not keep their lamps burning for their Lord till He came. Still, there were those who were fitted to receive Him, " and when the Bridegroom came, they that were ready went in with him to the wedding, and the door was shut." And so it is with us. The cry has gone forth, and between this and His actual coming the Lord is testing us whether our hearts are set upon Him or not.

We have now only time left to consider the promise: " Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God," etc. Here we see how definitely all the promises are connected with the time of glory-the " new Jerusalem "-here the heart is lifted up into its own proper dwelling-place. Are we taking the position of heavenly dwellers while walking this earth? Remark in how thorough a manner the saints are connected with the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling-place of him that overcometh. He shall be in God's temple, in contrast with the synagogue of Satan, in the full enjoyment of the things of God (every purpose of His love fully brought out). " Him will I make a pillar." He who was a faithful but weak one in the earth, when the professing church was great but not fulfilling the purpose of God as the " pillar and ground of the truth," shall then be the very pillar of strength, and that the very strength of God, because there had been firmness against the power of seduction.

It is always " my God." Throughout Christ keeps up this connection with Himself. He was once in appearance the weak one on the earth; He says, " I have been rejected and you have taken the place of rejection with Me, and I know you have been faithful to Me; I go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." He is the patient One who waits the Father's time for the glory which is due to Him, and we have part in His patience.

" I will write upon him the name of my God," the way in which Christ as a man knows God: " You shall have that name publicly set upon you, as you have not denied My name down here-' the city of my God,' waited for in faith; this is your place." Abraham looked for a city, whose builder and maker was God. It was a heavenly city they wanted for themselves on the earth, even when the flesh had built one here. This heavenly citizenship shall then be stamped upon the faithful, in the city of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the stranger on the earth. If men are looking for an ecclesiastical stability, a present establishment of things, they can have it now; but then it is not according to God's word: if content to walk simply with Christ now, waiting until God owns a city as His (" the city of my God "), they shall have it then: it comes down out of heaven from God. When Charles II was away from his country, those who were attached to his person felt themselves strangers in the land while their master was absent. And so it is with the Christian now; he belongs to Christ; he is a child of the day, waiting for Christ and the day of His appearing.

" My new name." It is not the old name of Messiah, but His wondrous new name, taken as the result of a heavenly redemption. We shall have what is stable then, though we have it not now in one sense.

May the Lord give us to know what it is to be really associated with Christ Himself, and to know this blessed thought of God about us, " that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace," etc. He has associated us with the object of all His infinite delight-His eternal delight; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and therefore have the privilege and portion of Jesus Himself. May God keep our hearts untainted by this present evil world and in freshness of affection to Himself. This can only be by keeping in communion with Christ Himself. To know our portion in Him, to know the value of His name, gives courage and strength to keep His word and not deny His name.

The Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches: 7 Lectures, Seven Churches, The Prophetical Addresses to the: Lecture 7

LECTURE 7

I had thought and hoped to have closed our consideration of this portion of scripture last evening; but I am not sorry now that time then forbade it, as I feel very strongly the importance of this last address to Laodicea. And it will give me the opportunity of taking up more generally what we have been going through in connection with the testimony of the word of God to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see in this address to the church of Laodicea, that it is threatened with final and complete judgment, without any possibility of escape whatever. It is not indeed that it has yet arrived at the full consummation of evil; for if it had, where would be the use of warning it? This church of Laodicea, as all the other six churches before, is addressed as having the character of the church of God (that is, as holding before God the position of acknowledged testimony of Him for the world); and as such it is threatened with rejection. This is important in connection with other parts of scripture. It is not the history of that which has been accomplished, but the warning and threat of that which is coming. Hence its character is prophetical. And as the whole book of Revelation is judgment, so likewise, in these addresses to the churches, we get the judgment of the professing church, standing under God's eye, as holding this position. And I would here recall to your memory what I have said before, and what it is important to remember, that what is before us in all these churches is not the work of God's grace in itself; for these addresses to the churches would have no place if it were-nor yet Christ the Head of the body, as the source of grace to the members-nor yet is it the work of the Spirit of God, as that of course is never the subject of judgment; as also the grace which flows down from the Head to the members can never fail. This can never be the subject either of warnings or threatenings. It is the condition and state of the church which is here shown forth, as holding the place of responsibility under the eye of God, and the consequent dealings of Christ with it, in the expectation of fruit.

Further, these addresses are not to individuals, but to churches; still there is a great deal to be gathered from these addresses by individuals who have an ear, through the instruction of the Holy Ghost: I trust that we even now have gathered a little of such instruction. The promises also are to individuals, " to him that overcometh " in the midst of evil circumstances, but the dealing is with the body.

It is not then the supply of the Spirit of grace from the Head, nor yet the directions through the Spirit of the Father's love dealing with the children within, because that supposes the church to be in an accepted and healthy state, and gives them directions suited to that state, and answering to the purpose for which it was called into church position. In Laodicea there is that which cannot apply to individuals; you may give warning to individuals in the church of God, " while the simple pass on and are punished." But this is not mere warning; excision is announced, and that can never apply to a saint of God. " Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is the excision of the external professing body, which bears the name of the church, as such. This leads us to see the important truth of the responsibility of the professing church of God on the earth; therefore it is I am so glad of this opportunity of going over again the general principles connected with this.

" Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The character of Christ given here is remarkable. In the last three churches we have seen that Christ leaves, so to speak, the characteristics given of Him in chapter 1 (that is, He is not presented in any part of the character that He takes in chapter I); but we find a new special revelation of Himself according to the circumstances of the church addressed. It is not the same traits of character given of Him as those John had seen in the vision; it does not connect itself thus with the things " seen," but with " the things that are," in a new and distinct condition from that in which they had stood in their original relationship with Christ; and therefore, a fresh revelation of Christ is made for the need and occasion of the church.

In Philadelphia, Christ was not known in the same character in which He was known in Thyatira, as " Son over his own house," but fresh traits of His character were to be seized by the church for its particular need. From the same period of time, and even before, that is, from the time of the complete corruption of its original standing, the coming of the Lord is held out to the church. The saint could no longer occupy himself

with the hope of the restoration of the church as a professing whole, and therefore the coming of the Lord is placed before it as its only resource, that the faithful remnant might look out for Him, finding in Christ that which they could lean upon and trust in, when the outward ground was slipping from under their feet. Those who had special faith in Jesus could not float on with the common stream of the thoughts of the church; for if they did, they would find themselves with Jezebel, or with Sardis, having a name to live and yet dead. Faith has need to be sustained in a peculiar manner, in order to keep me from the seductions of the " synagogue of Satan." Common grace will do when the church itself is in its place, but uncommon grace is needed to sustain the faithful when the church is not keeping its place. If Jezebel be there, I cannot go on with common faith; Christ and falsehood cannot go on together. If it be a name to live, being dead, I must have something special to sustain the life in me. Therefore, whether it be Jezebel seducing,1 or Babylon corrupting, or Laodicea going to be spued out, I could not go on content with the moral state of things. Therefore I should need special grace suited to it, discerned by spiritual-mindedness alone, not being the natural relationship between Christ and the church as such. Of course we at all times need the sustaining grace of God, we cannot get on without it, as everyone knows; I need it-you need it-we all need it. But when that which bears the name of the church of God is nigh unto cursing, is going to be spued out, then a double measure and peculiar character of grace is needed to sustain the faithful ones in the narrow and often lonely path in which they will be called to walk. And mark here, when they had got into the Philadelphian state of things, with its little strength, and keeping Christ's word, and not denying His name, the coming of the Lord is brought in for the comfort of the faithful ones; and then the subject is dropped.

Now here, though the professing church still subsists in form, yet it is utterly rejected, and it is unconditionally declared that Christ will spue it out of His mouth. The judgment is not accomplished, but it is certain and assumed as such. And the reason why the coming of the Lord is dropped after Philadelphia is, that, the whole thing being morally gone and the subject of judgment, the Lord presents Himself as outside in Laodicea, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock." If there are still saints within, the testimony to them is as from without the scene of which they make a part. In Philadelphia, all dealing with the saints as maintaining them in a place of testimony is closed; for the professing church had then become either Jezebel in corruption, or Sardis in death, so that it should be judged as the world; and the remnant had the testimony as keeping the word of Christ's patience, and are comforted by the assurance that Christ will come quickly. Now they were to be content with the assurance that then the synagogue of Satan would know that Christ had loved them.

In the church of Philadelphia, the character of Christ's coming was put in its true and proper place. Looked at by the church, Christ's coming is for itself. Christ says, " It is for you I am coming," and the church's hope is to see Himself. It is " you " and " myself," He says, that must be together, constituting the proper church character of hope and accomplished joy. Hence in chapter 22, after the Lord has gone through the whole prophecy, He says, " I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things, in the churches"" I am the bright and morning star "; and the presentation of Himself awakens the cry to Him to come. He does not say, when warning men, " Behold, I come quickly." The Spirit and the bride say, " Come," and then, in heart-assuring reply, He says, " Surely, I come quickly "; to which the church responds, " Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Thus it is very evident that the coming of the Lord to take the church unto Himself, must be something entirely between Himself and the church alone. But it will not be so with the remnant of Israel, for them the execution of the judgment will be needed, in order to their taking their place in the earth. In fact, the Lord's coming to the earth itself must be attended with the execution of judgment, gathering out of His " kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." And it is evident that the deliverance of the remnant of Israel connects the coming of the Lord with the execution of judgment upon what despises Him before Israel can possibly get their blessing. And this accounts for the strong cry of vengeance we find throughout the Psalms; take Psa. 94 for instance, " O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself." Now we do not want vengeance in order to be with Christ in blessing. God has given us grace as our portion in every way, and we have to deal entirely with grace. I am not looking for the Lord to come and avenge me on my enemies, for I am expecting to be caught up to meet Him in the air. And, that it may be clearly understood, I would again remark, that throughout the whole Scriptures this cry, in connection with the Lord's coming to the earth, is the language of the remnant of Israel, and not the language of the church of God.

Take Psa. 68:23, " that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same." These are not the thoughts that occupy my soul in the contemplation of meeting Jesus in the air. If, through grace, I have bowed to the grace of the Lamb, then I have no connection whatever with that which will come under the wrath of the Lamb. It is Himself that I am expecting for the sake of what is in Himself apart from anything else. So also in the description of the future Jewish times of blessing in Isaiah 6o: 12, " The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish "; while of the New Jerusalem it is said, " The leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations." Israel is the scene of God's righteous judgments; the church is the scene of God's sovereign grace; and it never gets out of this. For the church, as such, never calls for vengeance; it will see the righteousness of the vengeance when God shall avenge the blood of those who have suffered, and rejoice that corruption is destroyed; but its own portion is to be with Christ. The earth will be delivered through judgment; but our portion is to meet the Lord in the air, and to be forever with Him.

The church of Philadelphia having its proper portion, the coming of the Lord, the subject of this blessed hope closes. In Laodicea, therefore, there is nothing about the coming of the Lord, although it remains true of course, but still it is not put before it. It is another thing which is in hand; and here the prophet character comes in, because the Lord is here speaking of that which was about to happen in judgment. He is going to judge the church itself. It is always the professing church He speaks of (we must remember), that which takes the place of the church of God, as the testimony for God in the world. And mark now the peculiar character Christ takes here; if the church, this vessel of testimony for God, this witness, is set aside by the Lord in disgust, then the Lord comes in Himself as the " Amen, the faithful and true witness," not so much in the dignity of His Person, as shown in chapter r, but as the faithful and true witness-" the beginning of the creation of God," as going to take the place of that which had so entirely failed as God's witness on the earth.

In James we see the purpose of God is, " that we [the church] should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures," and the church will have that place in the fullness of restored creation. But even now the church is called to have its own peculiar place, as having the firstfruits of the Spirit; but looked at as in a position of testimony, the church has utterly failed, not holding, in the power of the Holy Ghost, this place of firstfruits of His creatures. For what are the fruits which mark that power? Are they not " love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance "? Do you see them in the professing church? No; and therefore it is, we say, that the professing church has failed to be this " kind of firstfruits of God's creatures "; for the professing church does not hold a place above the present state of creation or the world around it. Were a man to come to London from China, would he see these fruits of the Spirit in the professing church? or would he find the same covetousness, the same love of the world here in every way as in his own country? " O," he might say, " I could do all this in China. What Christians are doing in London (and true Christians too), I can do throughout China; though there may be a better and more refined way of carrying them out in London than in China." But in China there are the same results; for what professed Christians are doing in

London is also done in China, though it may be not so comfortably carried out as to the flesh, but quite as thoroughly as to the heart.

I do not believe that the professing church is yet fully ripened up into the final condition of Laodicea; if it were, there would be no use in warning it. God is holding the bridle, and does not yet allow the evil to be so fully developed. It was just as true in principle in Ephesus, the moment the church departed from her first love; but we do not find it developed till the Laodicean state, when Christ spues the whole thing out of His mouth. And remember it is the professing church that is thus spued out, and not the church of the living God, the body and bride of Christ. Nor is this excision a mere removal of the candlestick; for when it cannot be said of the professing church, " Ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world," then, instead of its being the object of Christ's delight, it becomes (terrible to say) a disgust to Him: " I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Nothing can be more solemn than the position the professing church will arrive at, to call forth such a statement on the part of the Lord. We find also in this another remarkable testimony to the successional character of these churches. In its general character, notwithstanding the special working of grace in detail, the professing church gets worse and worse, till it comes to that condition that it has to be spued out of Christ's mouth; and then " a door is opened in heaven," and John is caught up there; Rev. 4. Then the judgment of the world commences, and the introduction of the Only Begotten to His earthly inheritance.

God has done with the church as a testimony, the moment Laodicea is spued out. And when the church has come to this entire state of failure, then Christ supplants it as the " faithful and true witness " of God. What the church should have done, Christ presents Himself as doing. Christ is the Great Amen of all God's promises; the church should have shown how all the promises of God were Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus; but the church has not been able to do this; it has failed to put its amen to God's promises.

Amen means " firm verity and truth." (See Isa. 7:9.) " If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established," that is, " if you wilt not believe [or amen, for it is the same word], ye shall not be established [amened]." The meaning is, if you will not confirm my promises, you shall not be confirmed. Of course there is not a thought of the possibility of God's failing in His purposes in Christ, and therefore the church, the body of Christ, will be in glory with its Head: but if it is a question of testimony on the earth, then truly the church has not practically put its amen to the promises of God in Christ. For the church was called to manifest the power of its heavenly calling while walking on the earth; but it has not in its walk given the answer to that which God has affirmed. For we do not see the church giving the heavenly witness through the Holy Ghost, answering to the Lord Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of God; and, therefore, as God cannot leave Himself without a witness, Christ immediately presents Himself as the " Amen, the faithful and true witness," the Person who is going to seal up all the promises and prophecies, the One who puts the great amen to everything as the " faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The professing church has failed; it contains within its pale a great mass of people that were never converted, bearing the name of Christ without possessing the life of Christ. But the failure commenced with the true church; it was through them that corruption crept in; " they left their first love," and then, consequently, the world came in; as God says, " I looked in the place of righteousness, and behold, iniquity was there." As is often said, " the corruption of the best thing is the worst of corruptions "; so there is really nothing on the face of the whole earth so diametrically opposed to God, as professing Christianity.

" The beginning of the creation of God." Christ comes in here as the blessed witness that God will yet set up creation according to His own will, Christ Himself being the chief and center of it all. (See Prov. 8) It is not the promise pf Christ coming to take the church to Himself, as to Philadelphia, but Christ Himself taking the place of full and perfect testimony for God, and as the accomplisher of all God's promises, of which the church should have been the manifestation. In this character, Christ, as it were, supplants the church in the manifestation of the purposes and promises of God, which cannot fail. If the church be irrevocably gone, the witness remains, and that will be the stay of the faithful. Here it is that faith is sustained, even where evil is rising up like a flood; here is solid ground that nothing can touch, the strength on which the soul can stay supposing the church to be gone, for the stay of every soul is trusting in Him.

I would now refer to the general testimony in the word of God, as to the complete failure and consequent setting aside of that which ought to have borne testimony to Him, so that the honor, the power, and the glory shall redound to Christ and Christ alone. Man, as man, failed in that which was committed to him, and then we see Christ, the true Man, set up in the purposes of God; Psa. 8 The declaration of God is, that there will be the entire setting aside of all that has borne the name, title, and authority of God in the earth.

Take power, for instance, which was ordained of God to be in the hands of man, and who was thus in a certain sense the representative of God; so that, as Christians, we ought to own the powers that be, and submit to them as " ordained of God." " They were called gods unto whom the word of God came." " But they shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Now when God judges among the gods, what does this show? They have utterly failed-it is the immediate judgment of God which is executed. As to power then in the hands of man, the little stone, cut out without hands, smites the image of Gentile power, which becomes as chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind carries it away, and no more place is found for it. Christ then, according to the purpose of God, takes the full power of the kingdom.

Mark what patience God is exercising during the progress of evil denoted in this image of Daniel. There are three distinct characters of the abuse of power in Babylon, seen in the three successional steps of evil-idolatry, profaneness, and self-exalting apostasy. First, there was idolatry in Nebuchadnezzar setting up the statue of gold in the plains of Dura; setting up idolatry to have unity in a common religious influence. Secondly, profaneness in Belshazzar, who brings out the vessels of God's captive temple. Thirdly, apostasy in Darius, who set himself up to be God. God has long patience with all this, till at last, when power is headed up in positive and open rebellion against Christ, then God, rising up in the power of the stone cut without hands, dashes the whole thing to pieces, like a potter's vessel. Then the stone becomes a great mountain, filling the whole earth. Thus we see that the power that was at first given to man to be used for the glory of God, becoming corrupt in man's hand, is at the end used against God. And here Gentile power ceases in order to make way for Christ the great vessel of power and honor to God.

Take Israel under the law. Not only do they fail, fall on the stone and are broken, but the evil spirit of idolatry which had gone out of them, will take to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in subjects them to this perfection of wickedness, and their last state will be worse than the first. That is, they will go on ripening in evil, till at last, when they openly join in idolatry and apostate wickedness, God will give them up as a nation, though a remnant will be spared. There is the same failure in the house of David.

As regards the church of God, there is much more difficulty in believing that there will be the utter and final rejection of it, although of course it is only of the professing church that this will be true. It is a solemn truth, when evil comes in at the beginning, that it goes on increasing and

ripening until judgment comes; and mark, also, that judgment is not executed upon it until it is fully ripe-" The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." This principle is fully and plainly set forth in the parable of the tares. The tares were sown at the beginning, but were not to be rooted up at once. Both the tares and the wheat were to grow together until the harvest. Thus the Lord declares positively that the mischief came in at the beginning, and would go on ripening till the execution of judgment. It is not a question of individuals, or whether the wheat will be all gathered into the garner (that of course it will be), but that the public testimony is spoiled. The crop was spoiled in the field; and that could not be remedied by man, for, looked at as a crop in the field, man is not competent to remedy it, for man is not competent to judge it. Besides, our business is grace and not the rooting up of tares.

Take 2 Thessalonians: the mystery of iniquity was working in the days of the apostles, but something hindered its full manifestation. And the very same iniquity is still working, even in this our day, " only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way "; but the evil will still continue working until open and apostate rebellion will terminate in the full execution of judgment.

Take the Book of Revelation. Without entering into the detail, there is a broad, plain evident testimony to what would be the end of the whole dispensation: " I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet," chap. 16: 13. Persons may discuss what these frogs may be, but one thing is quite clear, that they are some power of evil going forth to the kings of the earth to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, to fight against God. Thus things are ripening up to the fullest manifestation of evil; and when iniquity has arrived at the full, then a great voice from the throne will say, " It is done," and judgment then immediately follows. We get something that comes more home to ourselves, although it is applied to the professing church directly.

Before the introduction of that perfect state of good connected with the power and reign of Christ, we see all the different threads of evil drawing together for one common judgment.

Man, in his character of open rebellion, setting up to be God Himself, must be judged.

Then Israel is in association with the apostate power, returning to idolatry, from which Abraham their father had been called out, identifying themselves with the apostate Gentiles, and saying, " We will have no king but Caesar." Therefore, having by their sins sold themselves to Caesar, they must go back to Caesar again, and associate in evil with the Gentiles, and finally be judged with them, while an election inherits the blessing. As to the Jewish nation itself, we read in Isa. 66 of its thorough departure-" eating swine's flesh."

Then there is the Babylonish corruption of Christianity; for the character of Babylon is that of idolatrous corruption, and it will be destroyed in the same way. All the evil will then be arrived at its height. The woman that rides the scarlet-colored beast, the mother of harlots, the full results of Jezebel's seduction; the beast, which is power; the false prophet; man in rebellion; Christianity in apostasy; the word of God set aside; the law departed from; grace despised: all these varied forms of evil are found drawing together and coalescing, and will be in the end the one common object of judgment (the evil being thus altogether set aside that there may be nothing left but good).

Is the professing church exempt from all this judgment? Certainly not. Although the wheat will all be safely gathered into the garner, yet, if we take the word of God as our guide, we cannot for one moment suppose that the professing church can be exempt from this general judgment. Take Jude, who in writing to the saints, says, it was needful that he should exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to them; and why? Because " there are certain men crept in unawares; ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." " And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds." But where were these false brethren found? In the church of God, as Jude says, " These are spots in your feasts of charity when they feast with you." They were not found among the Jews, nor yet among the heathen, but in the church of God, corrupting it, " feeding themselves without fear." God has most graciously allowed that there should be a distinct manifestation of every spring and form of evil that could ever possibly arise before the canon of Scripture was closed; that we might have the judgment of the written word of God on every evil as it arises. And without this we should not be able to detect the exceeding subtlety of the mystery of iniquity which is still working on, but, having the written word as our guide, as God's children we are called on to judge everything by that alone. Again in 2 Tim. 3, " In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers," etc., their false piety being made manifest by being " lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," and also " having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." And mark that it is not mere Judaism that is meant here, although the spirit of Judaism be at work. And it is also added, " that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Then the apostle (having taken up the varied characteristics of those false brethren who " have crept in unawares," which characteristics also serve as a guide to us) winds up the whole by saying to Timothy, " But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus "; for " all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Thus we learn, in Paul's instructions to Timothy, that the only sure and safe standing-place of the man of God, in this day of increasing iniquity, is the holy Scriptures; and that, in the plain godly use of them, as he and his mother and grandmother, pious women, had studied them-the very same holy Scriptures he had read from his youth. It is not authority or power (not even the power of the Spirit of God) that the saint can trust to for guidance, apart from the simple written word of God.

We learn, then, from these scriptures to which we have been referring, that the immediate occasion, object, and inner spring of all the terrible judgment which is coming, is the professing church itself. It ought to have been God's witness on the earth, Christ's epistle known and read of all men; but, having become corrupt, it is this professing church that primarily and definitely brings down the wrath of God. Oh! beloved friends, there cannot be a more solemn subject than this, that not only will Israel and the beast fall under judgment, but, according to God's own word, the professing church will come under the same condemnation. I apply the word ' church' here to Christendom, that which professes to bear the name of Christ. There is the same testimony in John's epistle, " Even now are there many Antichrists." I have no doubt but that the Antichrist will arise among the Jews, and he will be a full manifestation of that spirit of Antichrist which even now denies the Father and the Son, and also denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is indeed most fearful to think of that apostasy bearing a religious character as it does; that which characterizes the many Antichrists is the denial of Christian truth, and though there will be a full apostasy, still it will be an apostasy from the doctrines of Christianity. How soon did the spirit of it come in! how very soon was there cause to say, that " all men seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ! " May the Lord graciously open the eyes of His saints, to see the tone and real character of these

last evil days, and to remember, that though He has had long patience while He is gathering out souls for salvation, and in this sense to " account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation "-that His judgment, though delayed is not changed; for the word is gone forth out of His mouth, and the only remedy for the present evil is in judgment.

From the very beginning we see the principles of corruption coming in. The testimony for God failed. The tares were sown, thus the crop was spoiled in the field; the mystery of iniquity was working. In the address to Laodicea we find the Lord showing the evil principles which came in at the beginning producing the double character found in Laodicea. The object for which the seed had been sown in the field was spoiled. Instead of being witness for God, the church says, " I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Thus we find there are two points of special importance as characterizing this church of Laodicea-great pretension to spiritual riches in itself, and neither hot nor cold as regards Christ. First, there is great pretension to spiritual riches; but then as to life, they had the form of it, but not the power" thou art neither cold nor hot." It is not positive hatred to Christ, but it is not positive zeal for Christ. It is the church going on in outward comfort and worldliness, and at the same time making great pretensions to spiritual riches, which is a sure sign of poverty; for, whenever we see such great profession to possess within itself the riches of God, we shall be sure to find poverty. And why? Because those riches can only be found in Christ. When the church says, " I am rich and increased in goods [making itself the vessel of grace instead of Christ] and have need of nothing," it boasts of riches within itself. Thus in so doing, it neither puts its " amen " to the promises of God in Christ Jesus, nor is it the true and faithful witness for God. The church ceases to be this, directly it looks away from Christ as the only source; and when it takes itself to be the vessel of riches, it then necessarily becomes a false witness instead of a true one. For the moment I say the church is all this or that, or the church is what I am looking at and not Christ, the eye is completely taken off Christ to the church; I am looking to IT instead of to Him, however much I may pretend to honor Him. The faithfulness of God is not the question here, but our failure. This is of the last importance as guarding against deception.

In Philadelphia they were not possessing all that they were endowed with in Christ: they had but a little strength, and all that the Lord could say of them was, that they nad kept His word, and had not denied His name. While there was felt poverty in the church, Christ was delighting in them, and could say, I am for you, and I am coming for you. " I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to know that I have loved thee." But directly there is the pretension to riches in itself, when the church is taking riches and accrediting itself with them, instead of Christ's delighting in it, there is an expression of positive disgust-" I will spue thee out of my mouth." And if we look at the professing church at the present day, we shall see how it is getting into this state, rich in itself. When I find but very little strength, while the word is kept and His name not denied, then I can say, " Cheer up; the Lord is coming soon." For acknowledging I am poor and have but little strength is not necessarily unbelief in Christ; it is not necessarily denying what we have in Him for our use, when we lean upon Him for strength because we have none. It is the body drawing the fullness from the Head. But when I find in a church this thought of fullness and riches in itself, then I say, You are going on towards Laodicea, whose end is to be spued out of Christ's mouth. The church of Laodicea, having the thought of fullness and riches within herself, was perfectly ignorant of her state before God-" Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." Therefore, says the Lord, " I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

The church was not looking to the Lord for these, and, therefore, was wanting in every one of them. Gold is divine righteousness-the great contrast to human righteousness- and is that which characterizes the standing and riches and foundation of the saints. " The white raiment " is the works of the saints, which are the fruits of believing in divine righteousness. They are consequent upon the possession of divine righteousness. Human righteousness is quite a distinct thing from the righteousness of saints; for the righteousness of saints flows from hearts set at liberty by divine righteousness. If we look at the Faquir in India, or the Dervish in Turkey, we find plenty of works, but never anything that is founded on redemption. The works of the Spirit flow out from the Spirit which has been the seal of divine righteousness to the soul; these saintly works are the fruits of the Holy Ghost in us. Here, then, is the " white raiment," which those at Laodicea were lacking. Therefore, they had not got even the righteousness of saints, for, being without divine righteousness, they could have no practical spiritual righteousness, no saintly works; as it is said that the " fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." They were also wanting in " eye-salve "; for they were as blind as nature could be to the things of God, and without spiritual discernment in anything, and yet they were saying, " We see ": therefore their sin remained. Thus, having neither divine righteousness nor the consequent fruits of the Spirit, and still remaining in the blindness of nature, Laodicea wanted everything. There was abundance of pretension, while all that was real before God was wanting, and all that was fictitious was there.

But the Lord does not yet give up all dealing with them; but here in Laodicea the Lord takes an outside character; for when the nominal church has got practically into a Jewish position, then the Lord takes His stand outside, and calls to individual souls that are within: " Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice." The Lord desires to gain attention; He wants to be admitted. He warns the church of what is coming upon it-of positive judgment; but until that judgment is executed, He goes on necessarily in the exercise of His own blessed grace. But its objects are individual, for the church is given up. " If any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me "; he will have his portion at my table. " To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne."

Now, mark, this is apparently a great promise; but to me it seems the very least, as it is merely a place in the heavenly glory. They are told of no special association with Christ, such as we find in the promise to Pergamos, or even to the faithful in Sardis or in Thyatira. Nor is any thought of individual nearness, exclusively the portion of the bride, revealed as a motive. Reigning with Christ is merely the public display of reward and glory, which is a very different thing from the secret intimacy of the " hidden manna," and the " white stone." The knock was heard, and through grace obeyed; and they go up to heavenly glory. They have overcome, and, therefore, surely they must have their reward, " to sit with me on my throne." These also have their part in the " first resurrection," and, as such, they reign with Christ. But as much might be said of the two witnesses. They went up, " and their enemies beheld them." They sit on thrones; they have their reward, but the reward just amounts to the fact, that they have got their place in the glory. But there is not the same intimacy, there is not the special delight, there is not the Philadelphian joy of Christ having the church for the sake of herself, and the church having Christ for the sake of Himself. Still they get their place in the glory.

The solemn testimony of the Lord is, that the professing church is to be spued out of His mouth; and this ought to come home with more sorrow in our hearts than the judgment of the world, having a much more terrible character to the heart than the judgment of Antichrist himself, because it is something that disgusts Christ-that is nauseous to Him-from its having had a kind of outward connection with Himself.

And hence the importance of this, if we think of that in the midst of which we are. And in speaking of the professing church in the day in which we live, I mean what is commonly called Christendom, bearing the name of Christ, but in works denying Him. We find Christ's heart, thoughts, and nature, utterly rejecting that as disgusting which had been professing to be standing in connection with Himself.

There will be at the close much more connection between Judaism and nominal Christianity than people generally suppose. The lamb with two horns, the false prophet of Revelation, assuming the character of the Messiah, will play into the hands of the Roman emperor. From the very beginning the corruption in the church has had this double character, of idolatry, worshipping of angels, etc., and Judaism. Take the Colossians: " Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit," or " judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days "; and again, " Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Then take the Galatians: by Jewish suggestion they were observing days, months, times, and years. The tendency has ever been to mix up Christianity with Judaism; and when Judaism is set aside by God, it is nothing better than heathenism. (See Gal. 4:8-1o.) Carnal religion, the Gentilism of worshipping angels, philosophy and vain deceit, on the one hand, and the Judaism of keeping days, months, and years, on the other, had entered the church at the first, and were the occasion of Paul's warning against the going back to the beggarly elements, and that Jewish bondage from which they had been set free.

As he says, " After that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereby ye desire to be in bondage? " God had taken up the flesh in Israel, to prove that there was nothing good in it; He had allowed the Jew to follow the tendency of man's religion, in giving them the law, and ordinances, and sumptuous apparel, and gorgeous buildings, with the sound of trumpets and the like. But now Christ is come; and He is " the end of the law for righteousness," by which the Galatians were delivered from all their heathen ignorance and false gods. But then they go back, and, by embracing Judaism, they really got back again, as if still alive in flesh's life, in this world, into the old heathenism, the spirit of which is the religion of the flesh. As figures, God may have used these things to try man till the promised Seed was come. But now it has its own character, as before in heathenism, without God in any way-the righteousness of the flesh, which will take up with anything which will give a form of fair covering. Therefore the tide of corruption which set in at the beginning-this turning back to beggarly elements- religiousness in the flesh, that will settle itself in ordinances, seeking anything but eye-salve-will go on increasing till the end, being all one principle; and thus coalesce with what is formally Judaism, and Judaism with it in a full idolatrous character. The deception of the present day is Judaism; it is that which is satisfied with anything which takes the form without the power of godliness.

It is that principle of Babylonish idolatry which will ultimately govern through the beast. The spirit of infidelity will accept anything but the claim of the truth; it will accept Judaism as such, and it will accept the Babylonish system as such. And the consequence will be, that the unbelieving Jews will be seduced by the Babylonish power, taking the form of Judaism in the East, while in the West it will be open Babylonish idolatry. And most solemn it is to think that this world, through which we are walking, is to be the scene of all these things. And however much the professing church may now be the pride and boast of man, at the end it will as such be spued out of Christ's mouth, with every pretension even to the full power of the Holy Ghost, but with nothing that gives Christ His value, but attributing all the value to itself, accrediting itself with it.

May the Lord keep us in the Philadelphian condition-it may be with but very little strength-yet keeping the word of His patience, and in the sensible enjoyment of perfect association with Himself, who has set before us an open door, and will keep it open until He comes and takes us to Himself.

Letters 1, Narrowness; Philadelphian State to Be Sought; Testimony for These Days; Tract Depot; Work in the United States, The Dread of

You must not get discouraged because it does not go on as fast at Boston as you would wish. What is is solid: it has never been much worked, and God has His own time I should be glad if you had some one who could take the tract shop, and set you free when you wished to visit anywhere; but though it has not show, it is very useful, and the truth is considerably disseminated by it. I should have been glad myself to have worked more at B., but the Lord, who is wise, ordered it otherwise. I believe perseverance is your path of faith now; and be assured we are not weary of anything we can do to help, if you are not. You have a full place in our hearts. I feel that I in particular am your debtor for a great deal of kindness. You may say I never expect a tract depot to pay amongst us. Indeed, it hardly ever does without adjuncts, and readers of our books are not many in the States yet. I should think twice before I made a shop of it too: as it stands at present it is service. Selling Bibles, if practicable, is another thing....

Hitherto in infirmity and weakness the brethren have been a testimony, and are more and more publicly so. I do not expect this to be popular, especially in these last days; conversions may accompany it, and have, thank God, in many cases, as lately in Canada. But when it was not from the testimony and with it, the preaching left them in the world and in system. The Lord is over all: our part is to be faithful. Blessing is going on in these parts.... There is in the west too a movement from the feeling of the state of so-called churches, but they do not break bread for fear of meeting the difficulties of doctrine and discipline; but it does not, I hear, work, though there are devoted ones. They would avoid evident evil, and have work; but they shrink from believing the Lord sufficient to maintain a testimony.

Here I do think the Lord has been most gracious to brethren: I admit the difficulty, but I hold the Lord sufficient; and, if we hold fast the truth and good in the real bonds of Christ, He will use it for what is dear to His heart-little strength, but holding fast His word, and His name, content with His approbation. That is what I look to: then surely all the activity to win poor souls one can have; and He sets an open door.

It is striking, generally crossing the Atlantic I have been led out, and had many occasions. This time not so: I have just confessed Christ, and spoken to one or two, but have not felt led out at all, yet very happy. Perhaps from excessive work in London, &c., the Lord meant me to have a retreat and be quiet. I sit, read, write and say nothing to anybody, instead of getting amongst most. Around me at table they are Spaniards, and I do not know Spanish, but that is not all. In London, England, &c., I felt the Lord greatly with me; and there is an evident work going on, a great desire, and in men particularly, to hear, and many young men, and not novelty, as of course I have been often there; and it is, I hear, general. Just arrived at Demerara safe, through mercy.

I found more opportunity than when I wrote this of speaking to some, and it was understood that I was to be taken on that ground if talked with which makes it always easy; and I was encouraged with some, but I had less intercourse than often with all around, but read a good deal

in spite of heat, which was a hindrance to any application.

Affectionately yours ever.

Demerara,

1868

Letters 2, Blood and Water; Epistle to Philadelphia; Application of the Red Heifer as a Type; Soul's Restoration; Judgment of an Assembly

* * * I do not at all doubt that the apostle, when he says (1 John 1), "We have fellowship one with another," speaks of the fellowship of saints among themselves. There are three elements of the christian life: the first is being in the light as God is in the light—no veil. We must find ourselves in the presence of God fully revealed. If we cannot stand there, we cannot have intercourse with Him. The second is, that being thus in His presence, it is not, with us, the selfishness of the individual, but the communion of saints by the Holy Ghost, in the enjoyment of the full revelation of God Himself. The third is, that we are white as snow, so that we can be with joy in this light, which only makes manifest that we are all that the eye and heart of God desire in this respect—what our hearts also desire, in His presence.

The idea is abstract and absolute; it is the value and efficacy of the blood. It is not only restoration. It is an efficacy, moreover, which is never lost. My soul once washed, I am always before God according to the efficacy of this blood. Restoration is rather by water, although in virtue of the blood. (See John 13 and the "red heifer," Num. 19) But here, it is the value of the blood in itself: and, mark well, if we are in the light as God is in the light, it is indeed a real state, but the apostle does not say, "according to the light." It is our position now that the cross has revealed God without a veil. As this passage is generally interpreted, it ought to read: "If we do not walk according to the light, the blood cleanses us"; but there is no such thought. It is at the beginning of chapter 2 That we find provision made, as is necessary, in case of failure. I do not doubt that the light searches us; but here God does not see evil. He sees the man cleansed by the blood of Jesus. With verse 8 begins the consideration of known sin. Without doubt the blood cleanses us from everything; but when we think of the existence of sin in us, while knowing that the blood cleanses us from all, we are led to another truth of the gospel, it is that we are dead with Christ. (Rom. 6; Col. 2; 3; Gal. 2) This is for walk, and it is directed against the movement of this sin in the flesh. If sin has acted, we are brought to confess, not sin in the flesh, but what it has produced. (1 John 1:9.) Then we are pardoned and cleansed. This is true at the beginning, but true also in the details of life....

The characters that Christ takes in connection with these last days, are these: "The holy, the true." Yes, that is the character He takes; that which He desires in His own, in their walk, when He is about to come. We have to watch over ourselves and over our brethren, that it may be so. I feel, for my part, that we have, in these days, to watch very specially as to this holiness, though it is always an essential thing for the children of God.

... Evil is in the world, but we are in the hands of God. Christ came in after the evil, and has gained a complete victory over him who was their leader in it; thanks be to Him for it. He holds in His hands the keys of death and of hades, but the time has not yet come for taking away the evil from off the earth. God uses it for our good, but the evil is there.

1871.

Letters 2, Coming of the Lord; Devotedness; Philadelphian State to Be Sought; Testimony for These Days, The

Most Christians need to be enlightened as to salvation and their position in Christ. They confound their standing and their state. There are very few among them who understand the first verses of Heb. 10 For my own part, I teach, but I am always learning.

If the brethren are devoted and holy in their walk, their testimony will always be acknowledged by God; if not, they will not do much. The Lord, who speaks to us now, is "He that is holy, he that is true"; there must be these two things, as well as the grace and the patience to commend them. There must be truth, and the Lord communicates it to us, but there must be holiness, otherwise the truth itself will fall into disrepute. It is the important thing for the brethren, and then devotedness.

New York,

February 27th, 1875.

Letters 2, Moody's Work; Pearsall Smith

Thank you very much for sending me the account of your dear mother, whose simple-hearted and faithful walk has now ended so brightly. At her age it is but a natural and happy entering into rest, into what is far better. Abundant thanksgivings for your brother's conversion.... We must be more than content, if the Lord says "He hath done what he could." We, at least I, cannot say it, though I seek to serve Him. It is a comfort that He says to Philadelphia, " I know thy works"-without saying more-and, "thou hast a little strength," so as we are kept faithful, not denying His name, and keeping the word of His patience. How very gracious of the Lord to let your mother know that your brother was converted! It changes nothing, it is true, but we should notice these ways of the Lord; He is gracious on the way as He is at the end, and it is always Himself. I think it is striking, the Lord letting Moody's and Pearsall Smith's work run over the world as it does. In Switzerland they are full of the latter, at least in Basle. I do not fear it: it is wakening up, as all these revivals work. God graciously allows the work to go on, that there may be this, and people called out; but it has a popularity most useful to it as service (but which it would soon lose -perhaps would never have—if they were faithful), which I certainly do not covet. The Establishment missions wrought of old somewhat similarly, and I doubt

not there were many conversions, and rejoice with all my heart in it; but all beyond is worldly, and lowers the standard of Christianity. If the brethren keep it up their testimony will have its full place, besides the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God; and may it be with renewed energy! Church and remnant work, and the Christian's place, of which they know nothing, remains where it was. A full plain gospel I have to work through with all of them—the perfectionists, as Moody's people. They teach what ignores and denies it; but then we have only to add this, and make it plain, not oppose. For this I have a full opening, both at New York and here. In general we have cause for thankfulness here, but I should, as man, like to see things go faster, but you have to bring in a full gospel everywhere. No one has an idea of what God's children get as their teaching. But I must close.

Boston,

February 23rd, 1875.

Letters 2, Coming of the Lord; Good in the Midst of Evil; Presence of the Holy Spirit; Manna; Principles Exercised at the Beginning; the Wilderness; Truth of the Rapture Recovered, The

I was very glad to hear of and from you and of your work, the rather as it is not very likely that I shall get to America again, though in fine weather it is rather a rest; but I am now in my seventy-ninth year. You will be interested to hear, as you find the opposition of the clergy, and especially to the Lord's coming, that in Constantinople they have preached against that and breaking of bread, and that this has set the Armenians much on the inquiry as to both. I have no enmity, thank God, against any; but this character of opposition we must expect to meet. But there is One who "openeth, and no man shutteth," and sets before the saints in the last days an open door, even if we have but little strength.... I do not speak of it now, when I do, as a point to be proved, but as a part of christian truth, as much as the atonement, though not like it the foundation of grace: but they were converted to wait for His Son from heaven. In that congress (at New York) as far as I know of it, the presence of the Holy Ghost was, says, wholly left out. But these are the two truths brought out in these days, throwing much light on the truth of the first coining. They have been consciously my theme these fifty years and more. They started me in my path of service; the assurance of salvation came with them, and the christian character, as of the new creation, "like unto men that wait for their Lord." When man entered into the glory of God consequent on accomplished redemption, the Holy Ghost came down, till He comes to take us up. This connects the hope and the power of life and heavenly calling with accomplished redemption: Christ, Man at the right hand of God, is the central point. What set me free in 1827 is still the theme on which my soul dwells, with, I trust, much deeper sense of its importance—something much nearer to me, but the same truths. And blessed truths they are; and the hope, what a hope!

We have to seek, amidst all that is passing around us, to minister positive truth and blessing, Christ and what is eternal; and for that we must live of Him, and with Him too, and not much mind what passes around us, save as God brings it before our eyes. It is Christ—the positive good—the world wants, and saints too. Thus in the congress at New York there was the positive good of bringing the coming of the Lord publicly forward; but there were all sorts of heretics there, and persons deliberately hindering the truth in seeking to connect it with the world and the camp—avowing it, if the account is to be believed—leaving out the essential point of the presence of the Holy Ghost. Let us be content to be little and despised, but give out the full truth. The present great truth, redemption being known, is the presence of the Holy Ghost, what made it expedient Christ should leave the disciples; the future truth—in present hope—the coming of the Lord for the saints, and then in His own rights over the world; to sinners—as plain and complete a gospel as possible, and the time is short. Meanwhile we have to watch, to walk in love and self-judgment in patience, to be enough with Christ to bring a love which is above the evil into the midst of the evil in holiness. That is what Christ was, and that we have to seek to be. I do not doubt, dear brother, God enables you to do it better than me, but I dwell on it as that which passes through my mind as that which we need.

England has tried me more than any one will ever know but One; but it has been good for me, and I have felt that we are to rejoice in the Lord alway, and to be careful for nothing, and to count on Him who never fails, and He has not failed. How could He? I have unclouded confidence in His faithfulness to the end. With all this the Lord is working everywhere; and we have to think of what is of praise and is lovely and of good report, and find the God of peace with us.

In general, the work has made considerable progress in the United States. But all over the world the Spirit of God is working, and it awakes the bright hope that the blessed Lord is soon coming. The Lord be with you, dear brother, and with yours, and sustain you by His own presence in your work!

Ever affectionately yours in the Lord.

Pau,

1879.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 3, Revelation 4, Fragment on

There are two points I desire to notice in this chapter in connection with the perfect peace of the soul which belongs to the redeemed, and the consequent spirit and character of their worship. The subject matter of this book consists of judgment, for, with the exception of the church in bliss, the character of all is judgment. God is sitting on a throne, and His throne is not in the character of grace, but in that of Sinai. Not that the throne will be on the earth, but that the judgments, the lightnings and thunderings, which are coming on the earth, will issue from this throne. In this introductory chapter (which it is as to the earth) we have God in the character of Lord God Almighty, and not in the character of Father; but the names given in the Old Testament-Jehovah, Lord God Almighty- are in connection with His power which will be put forth in the coming judgments.

Now what shows out the perfect peace to which we as believers are brought, is seeing the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones round about the throne, whence those judgments are issuing, in perfect peace. They are close to the throne, round about the throne from whence all flow, and yet they are not at all alarmed-no disturbance, no trembling-because associated with the very throne from which all the judgments come. Then mark another thing. They are sitting, not even here seen standing, but sitting in perfect peace, like David, who went in and sat before the Lord. They worship, it is true, and fall down, which is a much higher thing than sitting. But how thoroughly this scene shows into what a place of perfect peace we are brought, that, when the judgments break forth, there is nothing in them to alarm us. They were seen sitting in perfect peace, and this is our place; so that however we may be tried down here in the world, when we come before God we can and ought to sit in peace, and rest there.

Then there is another thing. When the character of God is opened out in the threefold ascriptions of " Holy, holy, holy," does this disturb them? No. So with us, when the full character of God's holiness is seen in His justice, making good His holiness. If in the presence of this holiness I thought there was a spot on me, I could not be at peace before Him. What a blessing to have our home and place of rest where the thrice holy God is!

When they hear, " Holy, holy., holy, Lord God Almighty," their affections move them, and they fall down immediately in worship. While the judgments move them not the least, their affections take them off their thrones in their falling down to worship. It is the effect of being in perfect undisturbed peace that their affections find utterance in praise. They lay their crowns at His feet, attributing all to Him. They fall on their faces; this is a deeper thing than even sitting in peace before Him. " Thou art worthy... for thou hast created all things," etc. This is intelligent worship; they know why He is worthy -they know it for themselves (as in chapter 5), for He bought them to God by His blood.

There was no terror awakened in them when the thunderings and lightnings were going on; no, nor when the character of a thrice holy God is opened out: but when the glory is spoken of they worship. If there is fear, there can be no worship. " Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." But grace has set us in the place of worship by the power of the Holy Ghost: being made kings and priests unto God and His Father, we can worship Him. We are not in the glory yet, but may we grow in the sense of what He is, and worship Him who is worthy to be glorified.

This is God's claim as Creator; chapter 5 is the Lamb's title in redemption, leading to worship. The kings and priests in chapter 5 include more than the church. They have a royal, a priestly character, being more than the bride. The bride restrictively, does not come in until chapter 19. The subject of the whole book of Revelation is the throne preparing the world for the kingdom; but the kingdom is not ready without the bride, and therefore she is mentioned before the close of the book.

In verse 4 it is " four-and-twenty thrones," not " seats." Our translators were afraid to go so far as to say " thrones," but the word is the same as in the first clause of the verse. Here we see the happy place the church is brought into. They are sitting in dignity and peace, while all the circumstances of judgment are proceeding from the throne. They are unmoved by the lightnings and thunderings, etc. But mark the difference when the living creatures say, Holy, holy, holy, and give thanks. Instead of trembling at the holiness of God-which as sinners they would have done-they fall down to worship; and it is intelligent worship, for they say, " for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were, and have been created."

Letters 1, Attacks; the Great Tribulation, How to Meet

My own earnest hope is that brethren will walk on in peace, and take no notice whatever of attacks. I am sure it is the most morally dignified, and the path of grace. If the Lord should break down Mr.—-, they will not have perpetuated his dishonor.

As regards Rev. 7, I have for years considered it the most difficult portion of the Revelation. But the great tribulation is not my difficulty. Chapter 3:10 I think explains that. The great tribulation of Matt. 24, Jeremiah, and Dan. 12, is confined to Jacob and Judaea. The great difficulty for me is "before the throne." (Vers. 9, 15.) Were it not for one passage, I might freely take it morally, not actually. The English translation increases the difficulty: "dwell among them," is not in the passage (ver. 15), but "tabernacle over them," as the cloud did Israel. But the temple in no way sets them in heaven. In the holy city there is no temple. It is not the character of heavenly worship to worship in the temple. You will remark, they are not round about the throne, but before it. If in chapter 14:3 be applied to the 144,000, "before the throne" applies to those on earth; but in chapter 4: 5, 6 we have it applied to part of the furniture of the temple above. That they are not the church is to me clear. They are contrasted in their whole condition with the elders; they are saved by Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb, which connects them with the time of introductory government- though not of the millennium; they give no motive for their praise—a mark of the saints who are properly heavenly; their blessings are relief from sufferings, or being led by shepherd's care to food and refreshment; their relationship with God as before the throne takes them out of association with it—the true character of the strictly heavenly saints. Even the angels are round about the throne—not so these.

I certainly think they are separated pre-millennially—are in relationship with God on the ground of the place He takes as introducing the only-begotten into the world—of His throne above, but before He has introduced Him Hence they pass through the time of temptation which shall come upon all the world. I do not see that the object is to state earth or heaven, but the character of relationship, and that as the elect perfect number of Israel would be saved, so there would be a multitude of Gentiles spared in the time the throne of God held its place on high, and the Lamb was yet there.

But that those who are thus spared have eternal life as supposed by your inquirer, says absolutely nothing of the multitudes that come into existence during the millennium. So that the difficulty as to the rebels at the close does not exist. The great tribulation here spoken of is in no way confined to the Roman earth. I know of none which is particularly applied to that. But there are persons spared -those associated with idolatrous Jews, whom the Lord judges at His coming. The sun not smiting them would tend to prove they are on the earth. Unless the army of the beast (Rev. 19), I know of no objects of judgment of which a remnant is not spared. The wine-press may distinctively mark this, and Edom involved in it. To those who have not received the love of the truth who have it, strong delusion will be sent to believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. I can hardly think the dragon, beast, and false prophet do not assemble their subjects to Armageddon—but I suppose rather that it is a general assembly of all.

I was thinking the day your letter came of "Reflections on the Psalms."

Ever affectionately yours in the Lord.

clickbible.org