

Among the religions tolerated was Christianity, started by Christ and propagated by the apostles. At first it was regarded as an insignificant movement and little attention was paid to it by the leaders in Rome. But as it grew in numbers and influence the Empire began to fear for its effect on the state and tried to counteract it by persecution. After a few centuries the church or leaders therein began to grow corrupt, and they sought to concentrate their power with a view to reaching a condition where one man would dominate the entire brotherhood. This ambition for power was held back by the power of Rome whose religion was the pagan or heathen. But a change took place in this Empire that removed the hindrance. In the beginning of the fourth century the emperor was Constantine the Great. He finally professed to be converted to the Christian religion and accordingly gave it the endorsement of the Empire. That resulted in the union of church and state so that the emperor over the government and the bishop over the church, both of whom resided in the city of Rome, were joined in a mutual interest and hence took away the rights or privileges of both the local leaders in the congregations, and those of kings and governors over smaller sections of the Empire. There is a lengthy note under "General remarks" at 2 Thessalonians 2 which the reader should see again.

After the union of church and state was formed there followed a period of twelve centuries known as the apostasy or Dark Ages. During that time the Bible was virtually taken from the common people and everyone both in religious and civil matters had to bow to the dictates issued at Rome by the joint power of the emperor and bishop (who finally took the title of pope). This condition continued until the time of Martin Luther and the other Reformers, who gave the Bible back to their respective countries in the language of their people, resulting in the dissolving of the union of church and state. The preceding paragraphs give a general picture of what actually occurred according to history, and of course the symbols of the book of Revelation should be interpreted in a way that agrees with the facts of history. Various details and specific instances will be related as occasion arises in our study of the book. Before taking up the chapters and verses on the plan

that has been followed throughout the Commentary, it should be noted that the symbolical part of the book of Revelation is included in chapters 4 through 20. The three in the beginning and the two at the close of the book will be considered very much like the rest of the New Testament.

Verse 1. The word *revelation* occurs 12 times in the King James Version. It is from *apokalupsis* and Thayer defines it as follows: "An uncovering; 1. properly a laying bare, making naked." The revelation is said to be of or from Jesus Christ and God gave it unto him. It was to show things that were to come to pass or that were in the future. *Shortly* is a comparative term, for while some things predicted did take place in a short time literally, some of them were hundreds of years in the future. *Signified* is from *semaino*, which Thayer defines, "To give a sign, to signify, indicate." (See the comments on "symbols" in General remarks at the beginning of the chapter.) The revelation was sent to John and the bearer of it was an angel of the Lord. The writer is one of the twelve apostles but he uses the term *servant* which indicates his attitude of modesty. In a later verse he refers to himself as a brother to his readers in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2. *Who* is a pronoun that stands for *John* in the preceding verse and he is the writer of this book. *Bare record* means he is making a record of what he saw, which was according to the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is also the word of God because he gave Christ the authority to make the revelation known to John by an angel.

Verse 3. *Blessed* means happy and it is said of those who read the words of this *prophecy* or book. But the blessing is not on those who read it only, but they also must *hear* it which means to give heed to it. The writer does not stop there but adds the condition that they shall *keep* ("observe"—Thayer) them. These three significant terms certainly do not agree with the notion that the book of Revelation is one to be ignored by Bible students. *Time is at hand*. That is, the general program that was to extend down through the centuries was soon to begin.

Verse 4. Let the reader note the statements at the close of General Remarks, which show that the three chapters will be given before the symbolical part of the book begins. They will consist of letters or epistles sent

to a group of churches not far from where John was in exile. *The seven churches* does not mean there were no others in that territory for there were several. It means as if it said "write to the seven that will be named." The number seven was regarded as of special significance in old times, so that it came to be used as a symbol of completeness in many instances. Smith's Bible Dictionary says it was so regarded even among the Persians, Greeks, Indians and Romans. Doubtless the seven churches selected were representative of the general condition in the brotherhood at large, and hence the letters written to them may serve as important instruction for the congregations everywhere and at all times. *Asia* is a small province in what was known as Asia Minor until late years. It was one of the districts to which Peter addressed his first epistle (1 Peter 1: 1). The familiar salutation of grace and peace is given and it is from the same source. However, it is stated in different words, namely, from the One who *is, was and is to come*. This means that God always was and always will be. *Seven Spirits*. Paul says there is "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4: 4), so the term is figurative and used in the sense of completeness as symbolized by the number seven. This unit of seven Spirits is *before the throne* because the Spirit has always been an agency of God and Christ in carrying out the divine plans, and it would be appropriate for it to be always near at hand to receive orders.

Verse 5. *The faithful witness* does not imply there are no other witnesses who tell the truth since we know there are many. We therefore must take this to mean that Jesus was the bearer of testimony for God in a preeminent degree. *First begotten of the dead* to die no more (Romans 6: 9). *Prince of the kings of the earth*. All power in heaven and in earth was given to Christ (Matthew 28: 18) thus making Him a prince above all. Jesus showed his love for men by giving his blood for their cleansing.

Verse 6. Made us *kings and priests*. The word *kings* is from *BASILEUS* and I shall quote the definitions of a number of lexicons as follows: Greenfield, "A king, monarch, one possessing regal authority." Robinson, "A king." Thayer, "Leader of the people, prince, commander, lord of the land, king." Groves, "A king, monarch, sovereign, prince, chieftain." Donnegan, "A king."

Hickie, "A king." I have quoted thus extensively because there is a tendency upon the part of some to deny that Christians should be called kings since Christ only is king. Yet it is freely admitted that Christians are priests although Christ is our priest also. There should be no difficulty on this point, for Jesus is High Priest, while Christians are inferior priests under Him. Likewise they are inferior kings under Christ who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." Peter says Christians are a royal (kingly) priesthood (1 Peter 2: 9), and Paul told the Corinthians they had "reigned as kings" and furthermore he would that they "did reign" (1 Corinthians 4: 8). Since Christ accomplishes all His spiritual work through the church (Ephesians 3: 10, 12; 1 Timothy 3: 15), it is logical that if He is to be a king his servants are to cooperate in the work. That would make them secondary kings acting under their Chief. *Glory* means grandeur and *dominion* denotes scope or domain; John ascribes them to Christ to be everlasting.

Verse 7. *Behold* is a call to attention because something of great importance is about to be said. *He cometh with clouds*. The two men in white apparel (Acts 1: 9-11) announced the same thing, and Jesus also made the announcement before leaving the earth (Matthew 24: 30; 26: 64). *Every eye shall see him*. The fact that the writer next specifies the executioners of Christ as among those who *shall see him* proves that it will not be restricted to His faithful followers. That explodes the arrogant heresy taught by a group of materialists that Jesus came but that only they have seen Him, and that is because they are Jehovah's Witnesses. *All kindreds shall wail* because they will realize that Christ has come to judge the world. But John and all other faithful servants will not wail because they will "love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4: 8). That is why he exclaims *even so, Amen*; both terms mean virtually the same in effect.

Verse 8. The pronoun *I* refers to Christ because he is the one who is to come in the clouds. *Alpha and Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (the language in which the New Testament was written). It is a figure to indicate completeness, similar to saying a man knows his business "from A to Z." *Beginning and ending* denotes the same idea as the other figure, the particular words being

selected because Christ was present at all of the works of God from the beginning (John 1: 1-3; Ephesians 3: 9). *Is, was* and *is to come* has the same meaning as in verse 4. *The Almighty*. This phrase belongs primarily to God the Father, but since God is a name for the Deity or Godhead, and Christ is a member of that family, it is proper to ascribe the title to Him also. He is called "The everlasting Father" in Isaiah 9: 6, and it can be understood only because of His relation to the Deity.

Verse 9. John says he is *in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. It is impossible to be in something that does not exist, hence the kingdom of Christ was in existence in John's day; that disproves the heresy of premillennialists. *Patmos*. A number of reference works give a description of this place which agrees in substance. I shall quote from the Rand-McNally Bible Atlas as follows: "Patmos, to which the apostle John was banished. This lies 20 miles south of the island of Samos, 24 miles west of Asia Minor, and about 70 miles southwest of Ephesus. It is about 20 miles in circumference, and is rocky and barren. Its loneliness and seclusion made it a suitable place for the banishment of criminals; and to it the apostle John was banished by the emperor Domitian, near the close of the first Christian century." John says he was in this isle *for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*. The word *for* is from *διὰ*, which the Englishman's Greek New Testament translates "because of." In other words, John was banished to this lonely spot as a punishment by the Roman emperor, because of his preaching the word of God.

Verse 10. *In the Spirit* means he was in a spiritual rapture in which he could hear and see things that could not ordinarily be heard and seen. *Lord's day*. The New testament religion has no holy days as did that of the Old. However, the Lord arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16: 9), the church was started on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23: 16; Acts 2), the disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20: 7), and the congregational collection of money was made on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16: 1, 2). These facts would give the first day of the week some distinction that is said of no other day. The conclusion is clear that the same

day is what is meant by the *Lord's day* in our verse. *As of a trumpet*. The comparison is made because that kind of instrument had a vibratory sound that was intense in quality and far-reaching in volume. John does not mean he thought he heard a trumpet, for verse 12 says he turned to "see the voice." But the voice was so impressive that John likened it to a trumpet. *Heard behind me* is significant. By coming up behind John he could hear the voice before seeing the tremendous display of spiritual imagery accompanying it.

Verse 11. Before turning round the voice delivered the names of the churches to which he said in verse 4 he was writing. The remarks were repeated that are at the beginning of verse 8. *What thou seest, write*. This did not mean only what his eyes would behold, but also what he would hear, for later he is told what to put in the letters to the seven churches.

Verse 12. *Turned to see the voice*. That is he turned to see the source from which the voice was coming, and when he did he saw something more than the speaker. Candlesticks (or lampstands) for the purpose of light were used in the tabernacle services (Exodus 25: 31-37), but in that case there was only one unit that had seven parts to it. In the present the candlesticks are separate pieces, the reason for which will be seen in the next chapter.

Verse 13. *Like unto the Son of man*. Much of the language addressed to John is worded as if Christ did the talking personally. That is not the case, for He has been on his throne in heaven since his ascension and will remain there until He comes to judge the world (Hebrews 10: 12, 13). All that is said as coming from and concerning Christ is done through the instrumentality of an angel. (See chapter 22: 8.) The long garments were worn by the priests, and the girdle of gold around the breast betokened a king. All this was very appropriate because Christ is both High Priest and King (Zechariah 6: 13), and this angel was representing Him.

Verse 14. When *white* is used as a symbol, it indicates purity and glory. *Flame of fire*. The first word indicates that the eyes are active and penetrating. *Fire* will consume dross and rid a situation of that which is objectionable.

Verse 15. The original for *brass* is defined by Thayer as follows: "Some metal, like gold if not more precious." *As if they burned in a furnace* is said to indicate the brightness of the appearance. When used figuratively *many waters* means great numbers of people. The significance of this and the preceding verse is to show the dignity and authority of Christ as represented by this person.

Verse 16. *Had in his right hand* denotes the ability to grasp and support the things named. It is similar to a familiar saying that "God holds all things in the hollow of His hand." We will learn in verse 20 what the seven stars represent. *Sharp twoedged sword* is the word of God (Hebrews 4: 12). The original for *countenance* means the appearance in general, but in this passage Thayer defines it, "Face, countenance." In comparing this person's face to the shining sun (a condition when the sun is not obscured by clouds), the purpose is to indicate the penetrating brilliance of the Lord's face.

Verse 17. The sight and sound of this wonderful being so overcame John that he was prostrated with fear. Not that he was rendered unconscious for then he could not have been benefited by encouraging words which were spoken to him. *Fear not* indicates that John was affected with a feeling that perhaps something was about to happen for which he was not prepared. Hence he was given this assurance that the one who was before him was He that was *the first and the last*. Verse 8 tells us that the phrase refers to the Lord who is being represented by this angel.

Verse 18. This verse gives further items of the dignity and power of the person speaking to John. *Liveth, and was dead* identifies him as Christ since the Father was never dead. *Alive for evermore* is further proof that it is Christ because that is declared of him (Romans 6: 9). The person who holds a group of *keys* has the power or authority to open and shut. The places where Christ can use these *keys* will next be named. *Hell* is from HADES, which is the abode of departed spirits. *Death* is from THANATOS, which is the state of the body after the spirit leaves it. The passage as a whole means the Lord has the power or control over the bodies and souls of men. That is why Jesus said what he did in Matthew 10: 28.

Verse 19. The subject matter of what John is to write is divided into three parts, namely, what he *has seen, are,* and *shall be*; past, present and future. However the past goes back only to the things he had seen since coming as an exile to Patmos.

Verse 20. A *mystery* is anything not revealed or understood, and it is here applied to some of the things which John *has seen* and which until now had not been explained to him. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks represent the churches. Since the angel is telling John what are represented by the stars and candlesticks it is foolish for men to offer speculations on the subject. *Angels of the seven churches*. The word for *angel* in the New Testament is AGGELOS, which means primarily "a messenger." But it has several shades of application and each case must be considered separately. We should adhere to what the text says and then we will be on safe ground. The angels of these churches are spoken of in the singular number for each church. The churches were established ones and hence had elders who are always spoken of in the plural. Therefore all we know and all we need to know is that these angels were not elders but were persons who were responsible for getting the letters before the respective congregations. For that reason John was instructed to write the letters to these angels, and they in turn would see that the documents would be delivered to the churches in the proper way to make them responsible for the admonition and/or encouragement contained therein.

## Revelation 2

Verse 1. See the comments on last verse of the preceding chapter for explanation of *the angel*. This letter is written to the same church at Ephesus to which Paul wrote his epistle bearing that name. The beginning of this church is recorded in Acts 18: 19. Before John wrote his letter to it the congregation had been placed under elders (Acts 20: 17). The Authority for this letter identifies himself by repeating chapter 1: 13, but adding the significant fact that he *walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*. This signifies that Christ is present (in spirit) and knows what is going on in the churches of the brotherhood.

Verse 2. This and the following verse will name a number of things in the

conduct of the church that are favorable. By doing that the Lord sets a good example of giving due credit which would be well for disciples to follow in their treatment of others. *I know thy works.* The Greek for the first word has many shades of meaning but they are classified under virtually two groups only, namely, to know in the sense of being aware of, and to know in the sense of acknowledging or approving: the connection must determine which is used. In our verse the Lord means he approves of the works which are mentioned. *Labor and patience* means they were persistent in their labors. They were very good negatively in that they could *not bear them which are evil*. They were faithful in detecting and exposing false teachers. (See 1 John 4: 1.)

Verse 3. *Born* and *patience* are virtually the same as labor and patience in the preceding verse. The main idea is that they had followed such a course for a long time. They had likewise done these things for the Lord's *name's sake*, which denotes a proper motive technically for their *labors*. *Have not fainted* means they had been unfaltering in their religious activities.

Verse 4. *Nevertheless.* This single word conveys a very important truth, namely, while the Lord does not fail to see all the good a disciple does, yet that will not cause Him to accept the service unless it is correct as a whole. *Left thy first love.* This phrase may be illustrated by the warmth of feeling that exists in the first part of the relation of husband and wife. The word *love* is from AGAPE and its chief meaning is to have that regard for another that will cause one to be interested in his welfare and happiness. Such a love will prompt one even to "go out of his way" to do things to please the other. Likewise a Christian should have such a feeling for his brother and for Christ who is the bridegroom of the church. This going "out of his way" does not mean to go beyond the lawful regulations, for that would not be pleasing to a bridegroom regardless of its motive. But there are countless instances where a Christian can make a special exertion to show his love for the Lord. The church at Ephesus had fallen into the frame of mind where it performed its services from the legal standpoint only, and it had ceased to be a "labor of love" as Paul mentions in 1 Thessalonians 1: 3.

Verse 5. *From whence thou art fallen.* They had fallen from a condition of fervent love for Christ and his cause to one of legal or technical formality. *Repent.* They have not been charged with doing anything wrong; everything they did was right as far as the acts themselves were concerned. It was what they were *not* doing that made up the Lord's objection to them; they were right affirmatively but wrong negatively. Yet they were told to repent, which shows a disciple may be condemned for what he is not doing. (See Hebrews 2: 3.) *Do the first works* means those extra acts of love they did in the beginning of their service to Christ, not that they must repeat the first principles of the Gospel. *I will come quickly.* He was already walking round midst all the churches, but this means He will come specifically to this particular church to judge it. *Will remove thy candlestick.* Now we can see the reason for the remarks at chapter 1: 12 about the seven candlesticks being separate items. That makes it possible to remove one without disturbing the others. Another important thought is signified in this circumstance, namely, the churches of Christ are independent units as to their government and have no official connection with each other. It should be noted further that notwithstanding the complaints the Lord had against the church, He did not threaten to remove its candlestick (which would be His way of rejecting this church) unless it failed to repent. In connection with this case it is well to consider Matthew 11: 20 where Jesus upbraids some wicked cities "because they repented not." In Luke 13: 3, 5 He declares certain ones will perish "except they repent." In 2 Peter 3: 9 the wicked need not perish if they will "come to repentance." This group of kindred passages gives us an insight into the principle on which God deals with mankind. A church (or individual) does not forfeit its standing with God at the mere point of doing wrong (else we all would be falling daily), but it is when it does wrong and refuses to repent of it.

Verse 6. *Nicolaitans.* There is little definiteness in the treatment of this subject by the histories and lexicons and other works of reference. Thayer merely comments that they were "the followers of Nicolaus," a heretic in the time of the apostles. Robinson makes similar remarks about the subject. We

note that both the deeds and the doctrine of this sect are condemned. It had something to do with a life of fleshly indulgencies. The church at Ephesus rejected this sect which was one other point in its favor stated in the letter written by John.

Verse 7. *He that hath an ear* does not imply that some people are without ears literally, but this is a solemn call upon all to give profound attention to what is being said to the churches. *What the Spirit saith* is the same as what the Lord says for He uses the Spirit to direct John in writing the letters. *To the churches*. There is no indication that the seven letters were to be circulated generally among the seven churches. Instead in each separate instance the instruction is to write a certain letter to a particular church. Therefore the phrase *to the churches* signifies that what the Spirit says to any certain church that may be named among the seven, the Lord intends to be for the instruction of the churches of Christ everywhere. This "call to attention" is made in connection with each of the seven letters and will not be commented upon after this one. But the promises that are made are different each time, hence that part of the letters will be commented upon as we come to them. *Tree of life . . . paradise of God*. The phrasing about the tree is based on the one that was in the garden of Eden. Man lost that tree by sinning, but it may be regained in a spiritual form by proper conduct, namely, by *overcoming* his sins while in this life. *Paradise* comes from a word that may mean any place of bliss or happiness. That is why it is used in reference to the abode of the righteous after death (Luke 23: 43), and to the place where God dwells and will be the abode of the righteous after the judgment. Paul calls it both by "paradise" and "third heaven" in 2 Corinthians 12: 2, 4. John had a vision of the tree of life as he describes it in chapter 22: 2. The reader may see a fuller description of the original word for *paradise* at Nehemiah 2: 8 in Volume 2 of Bible Commentary.

Verse 8. See the comments on last verse of the preceding chapter for an explanation of *the angel*. Smyrna is one of the places that received a letter John was told to write. The description of the One who was dictating the letter is the same as in chapter 1: 18; the same who was walking in the midst of the churches. This is one of the

two that received no rebuke from the Lord in the letters to the seven churches.

Verse 9. *I know thy works*. See comments at verse 2 for the general definition of this phrase which is used at the beginning of each of the seven letters; in this place it means the Lord approves of their conduct. *Tribulation* refers to the oppression being put upon this church by the enemy. A part of this resulted in the loss of their possessions which brought upon them a condition of poverty. *But thou art rich*. They were poor as far as this world's goods was concerned but were "rich in faith" (James 2: 5). *Say they are Jews, and are not*. They belonged to the Jewish race but were not true to their religious profession; such people frequently joined with the heathen in persecuting the Christians. *Synagogues of Satan* means they really were serving the interests of Satan and hence were to be classed with his agents. Such insincere Jews would assemble in their synagogues for their pretended services to God, but due to their hypocrisy the Lord considered it a synagogue of Satan.

Verse 10. Imprisonment as a persecution was to be one feature of their tribulation which will be credited to the devil. *Ten days* is a figurative reference to a series of persecutions that were heaped upon the church under the opposition from the Roman government. This was to become a trial of their faith, and the Lord consoles them with the assurance that they need *fear none of those things*. *Faithful unto death*. Even death cannot defraud a true disciple of his reward. *Crown of life*. A crown is a decoration for being victor over a foe and such a token is worthy those who remain true to the Lord in the presence of death. Their body may die in His service but it will not deprive them of eternal life. (See Luke 12: 4.)

Verse 11. *He that overcometh* means the one who is "faithful unto death." The *second death* means the lake of fire (chapter 20: 14) which cannot hurt the faithful.

Verse 12. The author identifies himself in this place by His possession of the *sharp sword with two edges*. This refers to the word of God which is described in Hebrews 4: 12. The Lord says he *hath* this sword or that He originated it and has a perfect knowledge of the proper use of it. *And to*



*the angel* is explained at chapter 1: 20.

Verse 13. *I know thy works.* (See comments at verse 2.) *Know* is used in the sense of approval with regard to the *works* in this verse. *Where Satan's seat is.* Pergamos was in one of the worst centers of idolatry, making the temptation all the greater. This church as a whole withstood the influence of heathendom, holding fast to the name of Christ as the true person to worship. *Not denied my faith* denotes that they maintained the basis of that faith or system of religion which was the Gospel. Not much is said elsewhere about this Antipas further than what is said here. He is referred to as a "martyr" even as it is in our passage. However, the reason for so classifying him is an error, namely, because it is said that he *was slain* for his faith. He was a martyr before being slain because death is not what makes a man a martyr; it only proves that he was a martyr. That term is from the same Greek word as "witness" and it means the same. It is the word for "witness" in Hebrews 12: 1 where we know Paul is speaking about the faithful servants of God enumerated in the preceding chapter. We also know that some of those "witnesses" (martyrs) did not die, for they "wandered in deserts and in mountains." Hence a martyr is one who is true to the testimony of the Lord come what may, whether it be death or loss of goods or banishment like the case of John. Accordingly in the case of Antipas; he went to his death because he had been a true and *faithful martyr* for Christ.

Verse 14. *Thou hast there* means the church was holding within its fellowship these characters. *Hold the doctrine* denotes that they believe and retain and endorse it. The *doctrine of Balaam* is briefly stated in direct connection with this passage. It pertains to the advice that Balaam gave Balac after the four speeches that he (Balaam) made under the control of the Lord. The historical account of it is quoted from Josephus in connection with Numbers 25: 1-5 in Volume 1 of Bible Commentary. The persons in the church at Pergamos were endorsing the same practices which were a mixture of idolatry and immorality.

Verse 15. See the comments at verse 6 on the Nicolaitanes.

Verse 16. *Repent.* (See comments at verse 5 on this subject.) *Fight against them* means a spiritual war since the

weapon is the *sword of my mouth*. It means these guilty members will be exposed and condemned by this sword which is the word of God.

Verse 17. *He that hath an ear* is commented upon at verse 7. *Him that overcometh* signifies one who is faithful to the Lord until death. *Eat of the hidden manna.* This is a figure of speech formed from the circumstance recorded in Exodus 16: 32-34; it is referred to by Paul in Hebrews 9: 4. This manna was in the ark in the Most Holy Place where none were permitted to enter and partake. It is used here to represent the exclusive spiritual blessings that the Lord will bestow only on His faithful servants. *A white stone* alludes to some practices of old in which a favored contestant was given this kind of stone as a badge of distinction, on much the same principle as a soldier's decorations. This *new name* also signifies the special relation between a faithful servant and his Lord. *No man knoweth* in the sense that no man can realize or appreciate what it means to be thus blessed of the Lord.

Verse 18. See comments at chapter 1: 20 for the explanation of *the angel*. In this letter the author states his personal name before giving a description of himself and it is the Son of God. Comparing His eyes and feet to *fire* and *brass* is explained at chapter 1: 14, 15.

Verse 19. *I know thy works* is commented upon at verse 2. After naming the works He immediately uses the word *notwithstanding*, which shows that the *works* to which He refers are the things named in our present verse. Since they are all good we understand the word *know* is used in the sense of approval. *Charity* means an interest in the welfare of others, and *service* means the doing of something to assist in that welfare. *Faith* is produced by the word of God (Romans 10: 17) and with the assurance that the divine word is leading them aright, it would cultivate *patience* or endurance in their activities. In the beginning of the verse the word *works* is used as a general reference to their manner of life. It now is used to bring out the fact that they performed good deeds for the welfare of others. *Last to be more than the first.* This is as it should be, for Christians are expected not only to produce the fruits of righteousness but to increase therein (2 Corinthians 9: 10).

Verse 20. Having given the church credit for the good things it was doing the Lord next makes his complaints. *Thou sufferest*. When a church retains a bad character in its fellowship, it becomes a partaker of the evil deeds of that person and will be condemned by the Lord. (See verses 14, 15.) The church at Thyatira was doing so concerning a false prophetess named *Jezebel*. Thayer defines this word, "A second Jezebel," then gives us the following historical statement. "The symbolic name of a woman who pretended to be a prophetess, and who, addicted to antinomianism [the doctrine of faith alone], claimed for Christians the liberty of eating things sacrificed to idols." This statement of Thayer's agrees with the language of the verse.

Verse 21. *Gave her space* (of time) *to repent* indicates the longsuffering of God toward evildoers. *Repent of her fornication*. Doubtless those whose religion was so materialistic as to worship dumb idols also indulged themselves in fleshly fornication. However, it is evident from many passages that idolatry was classed as spiritual fornication in Bible times; one such passage is Jeremiah 3: 9.

Verse 22. This verse indicates that spiritual adultery (idolatry) is what is meant through most of these verses. The Lord here threatens to punish this wicked woman by casting her and her customers into a bed together. That would not be any punishment for a woman who was a literal adulteress. But the form of language is used that indicates something unpleasant was to be inflicted, for it refers to the bed as a place of tribulation. Of course in a case of literal adultery the Lord would regard an impure woman and her patrons as being guilty together. Likewise if a woman entices the professed servants of God to commit idolatry, the whole group would be held as partners in the guilt. (See Matthew 15: 14.)

Verse 23. *Kill her children with death*. This may sound strange to us if we try to be technical, for if a person is killed at all it would mean death. It is what is known as a Hebraism which means an expression peculiar to the speech of the Hebrews and used by others for the purpose of emphasis. The idea is to make the hearer realize the certainty that death is to be inflicted. It is similar to "thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2: 17), or not to "die the common death of all men" (Numbers 16: 29). *All the churches*

*shall know*. Whatever was going to be done was to be of such a public character as to make it an example. *Searcheth the reins and hearts*. The Lord is able to penetrate the innermost thoughts and expose the evil to the shame of the guilty. *Will give unto every one of you according to your works*. Those who are personally responsible for the conditions will be called to account.

Verse 24. *Unto you I say . . . as many as have not this doctrine*. In every condition of evil there are some who have not endorsed the evils of others, and they are not held responsible for that which they could not prevent. *Not known the depths of Satan*. Not been mixed up in these evil things of Satan who is prompting Jezebel and her partners. *As they speak* refers to the false teaching of this wicked woman and those being influenced by her. *Put upon you none other burden*. The Lord will not condemn them for what they cannot prevent, but He will "burden" them with the duty of abstaining from the evil practices that he has been condemning.

Verse 25. *Hold fast*, or maintain their disconnection with these evil things. *Till I come* is equivalent to saying "until death."

Verse 26. Figurative language must be based on some literal fact or possible fact. Christians are not to exercise any temporal rule over the world on the basis of their religious profession, but they are to be joint rulers with Christ as to spiritual conduct that will please the Lord. (See the comments at chapter 1: 6.) This partnership with Christ is on condition that the disciple is faithful *unto the end*, which means until death if such should be imposed upon him.

Verse 27. An iron rule does not always mean one of harshness, but that metal should also be thought of as being unyielding and strong and enduring under a strain. All the phrases of this verse should be understood in this figurative sense.

Verse 28. *Morning star*. Jesus calls himself the "morning star" in chapter 22: 16. The significance of this phrase is due to its brightness as it precedes the sun in rising, thus announcing that a new day is dawning. (See 2 Peter 1: 19.) The present verse means that the faithful disciple will be given the spiritual brightness of Christ.

Verse 29. *He that hath an ear*. (See verse 7.)



## Revelation 3

Verse 1. The Lord identifies himself as the one who has the seven *spirits of God*. Robinson says the following about this numeral: "The number *seven* was often put by the Jews for an indefinite round number. Likewise as a sacred number, of good omen, as also among the Egyptians, Arabians, Persians, etc." (See the comments at chapter 1: 4.) *I know thy works* is used in the sense of disapproval for it is directly followed by something that is bad. This church was alive as far as its profession and reputation were concerned, but in reality as the Lord saw it the church was dead.

Verse 2. The aforesaid charge of being dead is relative for dead people cannot do anything. Yet these people are exhorted to do something about that which is *ready to die*, which shows that some prospect of life was in sight. *Not found thy works perfect*. The church as a whole had some good qualities but it was not as good as it could and should be considering its opportunities.

Verse 3. *Remember . . . received and heard*. God holds men responsible according to the information and other advantages they have received (Luke 12: 47, 48). The church at Sardis had been given Gospel instruction and ought to have known better than think that a mere profession is sufficient. That is why it is warned to *hold fast* which means to preserve the talents that were given to it and also to develop them (Matthew 25: 16). *Repent*. This is another instance where disciples are exhorted to repent of a negative wrong. These people were guilty of not rising above a mere profession or reputation. They must bestir themselves and prove their right to such a name by more spiritual activity. Furthermore if a person does not make the progress or growth he should, he is sure to go the other way and become tainted with the evil things around him and thus *defile his garments* as most of these disciples had done. *Come on thee as a thief*. The Lord does not compare himself to a thief, only the hour of His coming is likened to one; for that reason it is important to be watchful.

Verse 4. *Hast a few names* means there were a few persons in Sardis who had not become defiled. We have already seen that God does not hold anyone responsible for what he cannot

prevent (chapter 2: 24); so it was with these *few names* in Sardis. *Walk with me in white*. White is an emblem of purity and is always so used in the Bible when taken figuratively (Psalms 51: 7; Isaiah 1: 18; Revelation 19: 8). This promise looks beyond the day of judgment to the eternal association with Jesus in the home of the soul. However, it does not wait until then for its fulfillment in every sense. It also includes the fellowship with Christ that a faithful disciple may claim and enjoy in this life. "When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word; What a glory He sheds on our way!" (See 1 John 1: 7.) *They are worthy*. We sometimes hear brethren criticize a familiar phrase "save us if worthy," and they will object that "none of us can ever be worthy." Jesus says we can, but he does not say that it is through the merits of our deeds. The worthiness consists in our relationship with the Lord as shown in the passage cited in 1 John above.

Verse 5. *He that overcometh* is the same as being faithful until death. *Clothed in white raiment* is explained at the preceding verse. *Not blot out his name out of the book of life*. It is a universal practice for institutions that consist of individual membership to keep a record of its names in a book. The fact is a basis for the figurative idea of a *book of life* in which the Lord keeps a list of his people (Malachi 3: 16; Luke 10: 20; Hebrews 12: 23; Revelation 20: 15). The point is that all whose names are there may be considered as those who are in good standing with the Lord. But their names are not put there with "indelible ink" but they may and will be *blotted out* if they are not faithful. *Will confess his name* is the same promise that Jesus made while on earth (Matthew 10: 32).

Verse 6. *He that hath an ear* is commented upon at chapter 2: 7.

Verse 7. The church in Philadelphia was another that did not receive any rebuke in the letters (the one at Smyrna being the other). The most of this verse is used in describing the One who is authorizing this letter. *Holy and true* may be said of all true servants of God but it is true of Christ in a complete sense. *Key of David* refers to the authority that was predicted for Christ because he was to come into the world as the most noted descendant of that great ancestor. (See comments at chapter 1: for meaning

of *key*.) That explanation will show why the opening and shutting are mentioned as pertaining to Christ and not to any mere man.

Verse 8. *I know thy works* is said in the sense of approval since everything said about this church is good. The *open door* is figurative and means the door of opportunity to advance the Gospel as it is expressed at 1 Corinthians 16: 9; 2 Corinthians 2: 12; Colossians 4: 3. *No man can shut it*. Man can hinder and persecute the disciples but he cannot actually prevent them from carrying out the Gospel life in the world. *Hast a little strength*. They are commended for being faithful even though their strength is not great, a condition which they cannot help. *Kept my word* means they had been true to the commandments in the word of God. *Not denied my name* means they were not ashamed to confess the name of Christ as explained at verse 5.

Verse 9. *Synagogue of Satan* is commented upon at chapter 2: 9; *say they are Jews and are not* is explained at the same place. *Worship*. This term comes from about 12 different Greek words and has a variety of meanings. A complete extract from the lexicon on the subject may be seen at Matthew 2: 2 in the first volume of the New Testament Commentary. At our present passage the word refers to an act of courtesy or admiring respect, as if to congratulate another over some favor that has been granted him. That favor is expressed by the words *to know that I have loved thee*.

Verse 10. *Word of my patience* denotes that they had endured according to His word. As a reward for their patience the Lord will *keep them* or preserve them when the *hour of temptation* (or trial) comes. Such a promise is so far-reaching, that it could refer to the specific siege of persecution that the pagan government was about to wage against the church, or to tribulations from the world in general.

Verse 11. *Behold* is an expression to arouse attentive interest. *I come quickly* would apply to the personal coming of Christ to judge the world, or to the close of their life at which time all opportunity for service will cease. In either case the important thing is to *hold that fast which thou hast* which means to maintain their present life of faithfulness. *That no man take thy crown*. Not that one man can literally get possession of a

crown that belongs to another. But if a disciple suffers the enemy to mislead him it will cause him to lose his crown.

Verse 12. *Him that overcometh* is equivalent to being faithful until death. *Make a pillar* is a figure of speech signifying a fixed or permanent place in the favor of God, and *go no more out* emphasizes the same thought. *Write upon him . . . name of the city*. Another figure meaning the faithful servant will be recognized as a citizen of the celestial city. (See Philippians 3: 20.) *My new name* means a name that will signify a victorious life for Christ. (See comments at chapter 2: 17.)

Verse 13. *He that hath an ear* is explained at chapter 2: 7.

Verse 14. See the comments at chapter 1: 20 for significance of *Angel*. The *Amen* is given special meaning here by the words *the faithful and true witness*. This is logical since the word *amen* means "so be it" or is an endorsement of some stated or implied fact. A true witness would not endorse any declaration that was not correct. *The beginning of the creation of God*. This is equivalent to the statement in Colossians 1: 15 that Christ is "the firstborn of every creature." The reader will do well to see the comments at that place also on a number of verses following it. The "beginning of the creation" coincides with John 1: 1-3 where Christ is said to have been "in the beginning," then explains it with the declaration that "all things were made by Him."

Verse 15. *I know thy works*. Again this is used in the sense of disapproval for it is followed immediately with something that is bad. *I would thou wert cold or hot*. The figure is based upon the idea of food and its agreeableness to the taste. Some articles are supposed to be eaten hot and others cold. If either kind becomes neutral on the subject of temperature it will be objectionable. Also there are some articles of food that are suitable in either condition, but it is not desired that they be between the two states. On that basis as an illustration the Lord desires his disciples not to be neutral.

Verse 16. No parable or illustration should be strained in the application. This one does not teach that God would be pleased at all with one who is cold in his religious practices—that point is not being considered in the

least in this illustration. The only idea is with the comparative preference for something cold over a lukewarm article. When we make the application the reason for this preference is evident. If a professed disciple is cold it will be clearly recognized by the world, and he will not have much influence in keeping others from the service of Christ through his example. On the other hand, a lukewarm disciple may be a tolerably good man so that others may admire him. Yet he is not urgent in advising them to be busy in the Master's service and consequently his influence will be detrimental to the cause of Christ and for that reason he will be rejected. Retaining the same subject matter for his figure, the Lord threatens to treat this church as a man would a piece of food that he took into his mouth and found it had become lukewarm; he will *spew* (spit) it out of his mouth.

Verse 17. The outstanding thought in this verse is to show how much a church can be self-deceived as to its real condition. Doubtless it possessed all of the things named of a temporal nature. One of the evil effects of earthly riches is to mislead their owners into a feeling of independence or self-sufficiency. That is why Jesus speaks of "the deceitfulness of riches" in Matthew 13: 22. The condition of this church was the opposite to that of Smyrna which was poor in this world's goods but was rich in faith. Our present case is one of complete deception, for the church had concluded that it had *need of nothing*. We often hear the remark that some man "is independently rich," which is just the state of mind the church at Laodicea was cherishing. The Lord admits that those people did not know (or realize) what their actual condition was from a spiritual standpoint. *Wretched* is defined by Thayer, "Enduring trials and troubles." They had a good many conflicts because of their lack of spiritual worth, but their confidence in their wealth gave them a false sense of triumph over them all. *Viscible* virtually refers to the same condition as being wretched and their deception covered their situation also. *Poor* in faith while rich in the perishable things of this world. *Blind* means their eyes of faith had become entirely afflicted with a spiritual cataract developed from their corroding wealth, and hence they could not see that they were naked.

Verse 18. *Gold tried in the fire* is a figurative name for faith (1 Peter 1: 7.) *White raiment* consists of the righteousness of the Lord's people (chapter 19: 8), and the people could have such raiment to wear if they would follow a life of righteous conduct. *Anoint thine eyes*. In 2 Peter 1: 9 the man who lacked the qualities named in that chapter is said to be "blind," and on that basis the church at Laodicea needed to use the anointment of those virtues to remove the cataract from their eyes.

Verse 19. *Love* in this place is from the word that signifies the warmest sentiments of affection. It makes a strong and unusual situation to say that such treatment of loved ones is the very proof of that love. Yet that is a principle that is true whether a human or divine Parent is being considered. (See Hebrew 12: 6, 9.) *Be zealous therefore*. Since these stern rebukes are evidence of the Lord's love for them, it should induce them to repent with zeal which means to be active about it. The fundamental meaning of repentance is a change from one condition to another for the better. These people were relying on their temporal wealth for gratification and were poor in faith. They now should take on a sincere interest in the spiritual things of Christ and begin serving him by righteous living.

Verse 20. The specific subject matter for the various churches seems to have been completed. This verse represents the general attitude of the Lord toward all human beings. The door is that of the heart into which Jesus will enter if given a welcome. He will not force an entrance into a man's life, for the only kind of service that will be pleasing to Him is a willing service. Hence the human heart must respond to the call of the Lord. *Sup with him and he with me*. In old times it was one of the surest indications of hospitality for a man to eat with another. It also was a token of recognition and endorsement. (See Mark 2: 16; 1 Corinthians 5: 11.) This mutual supping between Christ and his host is a figure of speech to indicate the great intimacy that He offers to share with a human being if permitted to do so.

Verse 21. *Him that overcometh* means one who is faithful under all trials and difficulties. *Sit with me in my throne* is another figurative expression, meaning that such a person

will be regarded as having right to that fellowship with Christ in the kingdom, that is stated in 1 Corinthians 4: 8 and 1 Peter 2: 9.

Verse 22. *He that hath an ear* is commented upon at chapter 2: 7.

#### Revelation 4

Verse 1. With this chapter we start into the symbolic part of this book. I urge the reader to turn back to the "General remarks" at the introduction of chapter 1, and carefully read through the paragraphs, especially for the purpose of being prepared to appreciate what will be said relative to the symbolic and literal features of the book. Bear in mind that literally John is on the isle of Patmos and will be there all through the book. When the language seems to take him to some other place it is only figuratively so. When he speaks about going somewhere or of seeing something that we know is not actually out there on that isle, we must understand that he had a vision of such things and is only writing a description of what he sees. *Door opened in heaven* signifies that John was to be admitted into the confidences of the Lord and be told things not known by other men. A voice like a trumpet indicates that it was strong and filled with the characteristic of authority. *Things which must be hereafter* has direct reference to events in the future. However, we should not forget the overall scope of his vision as stated in chapter 1: 19. That passage says he was to write of things pertaining to the past, present and future. That explains why he here tells us of conditions then existing, which will be involved in many of the future events of the book.

Verse 2. *In the spirit* means the vision was opening up before him. The first thing he saw was a throne in heaven and the throne was not vacant; *one sat on the throne*. That indicated that heaven had an occupant who had authority to give rule over the earth as well as over other persons in heaven.

Verse 3. These precious stones are used to indicate the worth and also the brilliance of the one on the throne. The *rainbow* refers to the arched halo that is generally pictured over the head of one occupying a place of authority. *Like unto an emerald*. This is another precious stone that is used to signify the glory about the head of the person occupying the throne.

Verse 4. God has had two organic systems of religion in the world, the Mosaic and the Christian. The former was arranged under twelve tribes (with their heads) and the latter is administered under twelve apostles (Matthew 19: 28). The four and twenty elders represent the two systems of religion. *Clothed in white raiment* signifies a life of righteousness, because all men who live righteously before God, whether they were in the days of the Mosaic system or in those of the Christian, will be permitted to surround the throne in heaven as victors over the world. These elders are in the vision to represent all the saved under the two systems.

Verse 5. *Lightnings and thunders and voices* symbolize authority issuing from the throne and it is coming from some being whose voice is as penetrating as lightning and as impressive as a roll of thunder. *Seven lamps* denote complete illumination and the *seven Spirits of God* are explained at chapter 1: 4.

Verse 6. A *sea* is deep and *crystal glass* is clear and pure, symbolizing the beauty of the scene around the throne. *Four beasts* is an unfortunate translation, for we always think of a "beast" as an animal of the lower world, and hence not a fitting symbol of something enjoying the dignity of these in this verse; the proper rendering of the original word is, "living creatures." *Full of eyes before and behind* symbolizes the ability to look in a universal direction.

Verse 7. In comparing one living creature with another it is intended only to consider one or two points of similarity, because there might be some characteristics common to all of them. A *lion* is bold and strong; a *calf* represents meekness; a *man* signifies more intelligence than other creatures; an *eagle* denotes exaltation and fleetness. The identity of these creatures and the reason why there were just four of them will be shown in the next chapter.

Verse 8. *Had each of them six wings*. Had it said that they had four wings even, it would have aroused our inquiry since a flying creature normally uses only two wings. We must conclude, therefore, that these wings were not all for the purpose of flying. A similar figure is given in Isaiah 6: 2 where the creatures that stood near the throne had each six wings. We may obtain some sugges-

tions for our verse by reading the use Isaiah said these creatures made of their six wings. Each one used two of his wings to *cover his face* (indicating humility in the presence of God); with two of them he *cover his feet* (indicating modesty before the throne); with two he *did fly* (denoting a readiness to go on any errand desired by the Lord). *Full of eyes within* denotes that they could make an intelligent application of the things they could see outwardly or around them. *Rest not* means they did not pause day or night in ascribing praise to the Lord. *Was and is and is to come* is commented upon at chapter 1: 4.

Verse 9. These beasts (living creatures) not only ascribed glory and honor to the Lord, but also gave *thanks* to Him who sat on the throne continuously. That for which they were thankful will be understood when we study the next chapter.

Verse 10. The *four and twenty elders* are explained at verse 4. *Cast their crowns* is not a movement as if discarding the crowns for all the circumstances are against anything that unfavorable. It was a gesture of respect, recognizing the Lord as the one to whom they owed all the honor that was being enjoyed in possessing crowns.

Verse 11. *Thou art worthy* is not an overture of flattery, for they immediately give their reasons for the expression of praise, namely, He was the Creator of all things.

### Revelation 5

Verse 1. *Him that sat on the throne* was God, for he is said to be the creator of all things, in the last verse of the preceding chapter. What was called a *book* in old times is the same as we call a roll; something like a long strip of paper and rolled up from one end. Let us remember we are in a book of signs or symbols. This *book* or roll is a symbol of the future events, and being sealed signifies that the future is unrevealed to all unless the seals can be broken so that the writing can be read. There were seven seals which is the complete number again, signifying that the future is hidden from the world. If the seals can be broken and the writing read, each one will reveal a part of the events that are to come in the future.

Verse 2. *Strong angel proclaiming*. He was asking a question *with a loud*

*voice* which signifies a general call in order to give all a chance. The call was to the task of opening the book which means to make predictions of the coming events.

Verse 3. *Heaven* (where God dwells), *earth* (the abode of living human beings), *under the earth* (the abode of departed spirits). These three regions take in all intelligent creatures in the universe. Note that no man in any place was able to respond, which signifies that the future is a sealed book as far as uninspired beings are concerned, whether they be in heaven or on earth.

Verse 4. Since the loud request had been made by a strong angel the importance of the subject was evident, which explains why John wept when *no one* (the word for man is not in the original) was able to respond. *Read the book, neither to look thereon* signifies that unless the seals can be broken, no uninspired person can even see the writing much less read (understand and interpret) it.

Verse 5. *One of the elders* means one of the four and twenty who represent the two great systems of religion. He was able to console John and bid him refrain from weeping, because there was one available who would be able to open the book. *Lion of the tribe of Juda* (Judah). In Genesis 49: 9, 10 this lion is predicted and Hebrews 7: 14 tells us that Christ came from the tribe of Juda. *Root of David* means that Christ was the very important descendant of David the son of Jesse (Isaiah 11: 1, 10). This conversation represents the leaders of the two organized systems of religion as understanding that the great plans in which they were only agents in the service of God, were made good through the merits of this Lion.

Verse 6. *In the midst*, etc. Thayer gives us the rendering as follows: "And I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and the elders." He then offers his explanation as follows: "In the vacant space between the throne and the living creatures (on one side) and elders (on the other side), accordingly nearest the throne." *As it had been slain*. A lamb may be slain and then come back to life still bearing the marks of its death wounds. Thus Jesus was permitted to retain the wound marks until He had completed the great work with His apostles. (See John 20: 20.)

*Horns* in symbolic language means authority, and *seven* of them means complete authority. (See Matthew 28: 18.) *Seven eyes* signifies a perfect vision which would be necessary in order to see into the future. *Seven Spirits* is explained at chapter 1: 4.

Verse 7. *He* (this Lion and Lamb) came to the throne to get the book. *Him that sat upon the throne* means God, and in giving the book to the Lamb signifies that God gave his Son the ability to reveal the future events. This fact is stated literally in the first verse of the book of Revelation.

Verse 8. When God gave to his Son the right to open the book it caused rejoicing of all concerned in the great plans. The verse symbolizes this by telling of the actions of the *four beasts* (living creatures) and the *four and twenty elders*. They all fell down before the Lamb which is the usual practice of manifesting homage and recognition to a superior. *Harps* in symbolic language signify instruments of praise, and the next verse will tell us that these instruments were the human voice because they were used by which to sing. *Odors* in literal performances refers to incense offered to God in the services to Him (Exodus 30: 7, 8), but John interprets it as *prayers of saints*. This denotes that under whatever system of God's religions a man has lived, he is regarded as a *saint* (righteous person) and has the privilege of praying to God. This explains why it was said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (Acts 10: 4), he having lived under the Patriarchal Dispensation, the unorganized system of religion. And it also accounts for the fact that Saul of Tarsus spent the time praying in Acts 9: 11. It is true the system under which he was brought up was done away but he had not realized it as yet.

Verse 9. It is important to note that the pronoun *they* means the *four beasts* (living creatures) and the *four and twenty elders* of the preceding verse. Also that the connection shows the word *saints* (righteous persons) applies to those who have lived under the systems designated by these *four* and *four and twenty*. After their performance of homage to Christ these creatures state their reasons for it, that He was worthy to be the one to open the book. In stating their reasons they will give their identity to which reference was made in the comments

at chapter 4: 7. They say, *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*. We know that human beings only are the subjects of salvation, therefore these living creatures represent the redeemed human beings of the earth. The reason there are just four of the creatures in the one group is the fact that the surface of the earth has just four directions, and hence the saved would all come within the scope of those four areas. The four and twenty could join in the identifying declaration on the principle that both of the organized systems of religion were conducted in a way that was looking toward the universal salvation of mankind. *Sang a new song*. It was new in that they could not sing the praises of Christ as the actual Redeemer until he had qualified by being *slain* and giving His blood.

Verse 10. See the comments on chapter 1: 6 for the explanation of this verse.

Verse 11. The several phrases in the end of this verse are represented by only two Greek words in the original which The Englishman's Greek New Testament renders "thousands of thousands." Whichever translation we adopt, we should understand it to be a figurative statement to indicate a very great number of the heavenly host. They were joining in the praises of the four creatures and the four and twenty elders.

Verse 12. The praises of these angels were along the same line as those that were given by the creatures in verse 9 and for the same reason. The favors named in the verse do not refer to any specific blessings. As a group they signify that the Lamb of God is entitled to every blessing that God can bestow, and that they will rejoice in the great honors thus given to Him.

Verse 13. *Heaven, earth and under the earth* is explained at verse 3. *In the sea and all that are in them*. This cannot mean the men who had lived on the waters for they are included in the creatures *on the earth*. It means the living creatures of that domain which constitutes three fourths of the surface of the earth. Of course those dumb things cannot intelligently praise the Lord, but their very existence and service to humanity under the supervision of Him is a form of praise and an evidence of the existence and wisdom and power of the Al-



mighty. (See Psalms 148: 1-10.) *Him that sitteth upon the throne* is God the Father and *the Lamb* is God the Son.

Verse 14. The four creatures and the four and twenty elders had already expressed their admiration (verses 8, 9), and when all these other beings uttered their praises it caused the creatures and elders to voice their pleasure by an *amen* of approval.

### Revelation 6

Verse 1. The Lamb began to open the book (or roll), and when the first seal was broken John heard a voice like thunder. That indicated a powerful voice was sounding that would demand attention. Accordingly one of the four creatures called to John to come and see.

Verse 2. Horses were used in war and it could mean either spiritual or carnal war depending upon the connection in which it is used. The rider on the horse had both a *crown* and a *bow*, which signified that he was a person of authority and that he would engage in war. The rider represents Christ who was fighting for the truth through the instrumentality of His disciples. The white horse agrees with the phrase *conquering and to conquer*, for the Gospel won many battles over the foe in the first years of the church.

Verse 3. At the breaking of each of the first four seals the event was announced by one of the four beasts (or creatures). *Come and see* means to call the attention of John to what was about to be revealed.

Verse 4. The next horse was red which denotes bloodshed. Accordingly the rider was given power to take peace from the earth. This was fulfilled by the persecutions the Roman Empire began to wage against the Christians when their teaching began to show up with greater success.

Verse 5. The third seal was broken and the announcement was made for John to come and see. This time he saw a black horse which symbolized a condition of famine or shortage of food. The same subject was further indicated by the *pair of balances* that the rider held in his hand. It denoted that the necessities of life would be measured out to the people.

Verse 6. *Wheat and barley* are necessities of life, and the great price that is indicated by the figures shows that it was to be a time of scarcity, which is generally the case after a siege of

warfare. *Oil and wine* are not necessary as articles of food, but are helpful as agencies of relief in times of distress. In the midst of the hardships the Lord predicted some relief would be afforded through these articles.

Verse 7. No description is given of the voice of the beasts (living creatures) after the first one. But in each case (up to the fourth) the call to attention is made to John that he would be sure to see what was about to be revealed.

Verse 8. When the fourth seal was broken John saw a pale horse which indicates death. That calamity would come first as a result of the terrible famine which the war had brought about, and it was made worse by the persecutions that were fostered by the Pagan Roman Empire. *Death and hell* are named in the order they would observe in their occurrence. The word *hell* is from *Hades* which is the abode of departed spirits. It was logical therefore to name them in the order as stated. *Power . . . over the fourth part of the earth*. God never did suffer the enemy to exterminate completely the victims attacked. The general purpose of the enemy was *to kill*. The means by which it might be accomplished were various, such as with the *sword and hunger*. With either of these the death would be a direct result of the means used. *With death* might seem a meaningless phrase unless it is understood that it refers to some indirect means such as a pestilence. Another means of causing the death of the Lord's people was to expose them to vicious beasts as was done in the arenas of Rome.

Verse 9. This verse brings to the fifth seal but nothing is said by either of the four creatures. Evidently by this time John's interest had been so centered on the drama being enacted before him that it was not necessary to call his attention. He was shown an altar because this is a book of symbols that are used to denote some literal facts. The present symbol is drawn from the temple of the Jews in which the altar was the center of their worship. At the bottom of the altar the blood of the sacrifices was poured, the bodies having been laid on the altar to be burned. (See Leviticus 4: 7.) From this imagery it was fitting to represent the Christians as victims that had been sacrificed to the cruelty of their persecutors, and also to picture their souls as being poured out at the

foot of the altar. It is interesting to note that the bodies only had been put on the altar which left the souls still alive and able to speak intelligently. (See Matthew 10: 28.) The word *for* is used twice which is from the Greek word ΔΙΑ. The Englishman's Greek New Testament renders this word "because of." The point is that these Christians had been killed "because of" their defense of the word of God. It is the same word that is used in chapter 1: 9 where John was banished to the isle of Patmos "for" (because of) the word of God. Hence both John and these Christians who had been slain were martyrs, because the word means one who is faithful to the word of God regardless of threatened consequences.

Verse 10. The witnesses whose souls John saw (he was able to see a soul because he himself was "in the Spirit"—chapter 1: 10) were calling for vengeance to be put on the ones who had caused their mistreatment.

Verse 11. Before replying to their cry with the explanation of the situation, they were given present consolation in the form of *white robes*. That indicated their standing of favor with God for chapter 3: 4 shows white as a symbol of worthiness in His sight. It was then told them that they would be avenged after a while, namely, when some of their brethren should be killed. *As they were* means they would be killed "for" (because of) the word of God. This was fulfilled as reported in chapter 20: 4 which will be commented upon when we come to that passage.

Verse 12. Following the opening of the fifth seal John saw some of the results of persecution, and it had been brought against Christians by Pagan (heathen) Rome. But there came a change in the general conditions. The emperor Constantine professed to be converted to Christianity, and it caused him to make many reverses in the activities of men in high places. The statements through the rest of this chapter are worded as if John saw the works of creation undergo radical changes. Such is to be expected in a book written with symbols. Hence the earthquake and darkening of the heavenly lights are tokens of the disturbances in the government.

Verse 13. *Stars of heaven* refer to men in high places who lost much of their power by the changes that Constantine was making. *Untimely figs* means fruit that is not ripe, yet it was

shaken loose by the revolution going on in the government.

Verse 14. The *heaven* refers to the region that covers the earth, used here as a symbol of the great domain in which important men ruled with selfish interests. The disappearance of this reign of selfishness is likened to a *scroll* that is rolled up and laid away. *Mountains* and *isles* in symbolic language means seats of government, and these began to be altered by the revolutionary work of Constantine.

Verse 15. The various great persons named in this verse are the men in high position who had been holding uninterrupted sway over their people. As they began to see the fading of their domination it filled them with terror. Such an attitude is symbolized by an attempt to find hiding places in dens and among the rocks.

Verse 16. In their state of fear they would prefer being put out of the conflict, even if the mountains would tumble down upon them. *Hide us . . . from the face of the Lamb*. These men who had held sway for so long were made to realize that the change was brought about by the influence of the religion their emperor had espoused.

Verse 17. *Great day of his wrath* does not refer to the last great day of judgment, for the book is not that far along in the world drama. It is the day in which these overbearing men in high places in the pagan government of Rome, came to realize the effects that the religion of Christ was bringing as a punishment upon them.

### Revelation 7

Verse 1. After the altar scene in chapter 6: 9-11, the vision opens the sixth seal to give a view of the consternation that came upon the men in high places, because of their mistreatment of Christians and because they were faced with the reverses that the emperor had forced upon them. The present chapter extends the consideration that God had for the "martyrs," at the same time He was bringing the siege of consternation upon the persecutors of His people. The *four angels* are so numbered because of the *four corners* or four points of the earth's compass. *Holding the four winds* symbolizes the blowing of the wrath of God over the realm of the persecutors, and these angels were holding this wind ready to be released whenever they were so ordered.

Verse 2. As the four angels were "standing at attention" ready to turn the winds loose upon *the earth* (referring to the domains of the Roman Empire), another angel was seen coming with a special message to the four. *From the east* is figurative and means it was from the throne of God, because he is the source of all spiritual light, even as the sun which brings material light to the world, first appears in the east. *Hurt the earth* is referring back to the conditions of consternation and destruction described in the closing verses of chapter 6.

Verse 3. They were told to hold back the winds until the faithful ones had been accounted for. A seal is a stamp of ownership and is placed on the proper persons to indicate the approval of the authority behind it. (See the comments at 1 Corinthians 9: 2.) This seal was to be placed in the forehead which indicates they would be visible to the public. Whatever was the exact fulfilling of this symbol, there was something that would tell the world of God's approval of them. Hence when the wicked men of power were undergoing their terrors, they could realize how much they had failed in their wicked designs. Right while they were trembling in the terrors of their crumbling dominions, they could see the victims of their cruelty with the marks of approval from their God.

Verse 4. The number of those who were sealed is given in exact and equal figures, which makes us know that it is all another expression of figurative speech and that the meaning is that great numbers of true Christians had won the stamp of approval from the Lord. *Tribes of the children of Israel*. It is known that after the conversion of Cornelius in the first four years of the Gospel, the Gentiles furnished many converts to Christ. Hence there were many of those who were persecuted as well as of the Jews. The reference to the twelve tribes is therefore accommodative, similar to the instance in James 1: 1.

Verses 5-8. Having explained the significance of the tribal classification, and since the same thing is said of each tribe, I am combining these verses into one paragraph to conserve time and space.

Verse 9. This verse verifies the comments at verse 4, for here we have the same kind of persons referred to in other numerical terms. They also are said to be from *all nations*, etc., which

would prevent us from restricting the "twelve tribes" to the Jews. *White robes* signified a life of righteousness and *palms* are medals betokening their victory over "great tribulation" (verse 14).

Verse 10. *Salvation to our God* means to ascribe salvation to Him, and *unto the Lamb* is combined in the praise because God perfects all plans through the Son.

Verse 11. The angels stood round about the throne and in the presence of the elders and the four living creatures as a mark of respect. But when they performed their homage of worship it was before the throne unto God.

Verse 12. *Saying, Amen*. Thayer says that at the beginning of a discourse the word means, "Surely, of a truth, truly." Thus the angels were announcing that they were about to utter something that would surely be the truth, namely, that all the good qualities mentioned in the verse should truly be ascribed to God. The declaration was made emphatic still more by closing it with *Amen*.

Verse 13. The elder put his statement in the form of a question to gain the attention of John. The ones *arrayed in white robes* were those in chapter 6:11 and those of the twelve tribes in this chapter.

Verse 14. John understood that such was the purpose of the question, for he replied *thou knowest*. The elder then gave the answer which confirms the idea that they were the persecuted servants of God already referred to. *Came out of great tribulation* denotes their triumph over their persecutors. Not that they escaped death, for John had seen their souls outside of their bodies. But if a servant of God is faithful even in the midst of persecution then death cannot rob him of victory. *Washed their robes* is a figurative reference to their being cleaned by the blood of Christ.

Verse 15. All of the statements in this verse are figurative, for the purified saints had lost their lives for testifying on behalf of the word of God. But they were being held in honored remembrance and were destined to be always "welcome callers" in the intimacies of the Father.

Verse 16. Shall not *hunger* nor *thirst* because those are wants that pertain to this life, and they have become citizens of a region where physical wants are unknown. The light and

heat of the sun are things of the past for the same reasons.

Verse 17. *Lamb shall feed them* with delicacies that are unknown to men living in the flesh. *Living fountains of waters* are among the blissful objects to be enjoyed by those who overcome by faith in the Lamb. *Wipe away all tears* by preventing anything that could cause tears.

### Revelation 8

Verse 1. The seventh and last seal was opened but nothing took place for half an hour. In the march of events it frequently happens that a lull will come between different campaigns. That is described here as being a silence of half an hour. We recall that when the four angels in chapter 7: 1-3 were prepared to continue the action of God's judgments against the persecutors of His people, they were told to hold the winds back until the sealing of the faithful had been completed. This half hour silence represents the lull in the judgments while the sealing was being done.

Verse 2. The events of the seventh seal will include several verses, for there are seven angels involved in the events and all that transpires in connection with them is what was revealed when the seventh seal was broken. The angels were given each a trumpet but they will not all be used in the same series. Four of them will sound one after the other, then will come a halt after which the remaining three will sound. (See verse 13.) Doubtless the first four angels correspond with the four that were holding the four winds that were to bring consternation upon the persecutors of God's people, which is the reason why the seven angels are divided into separate groups, four and three.

Verse 3. Incense is a symbol of prayer, and while the judgments of God against the persecutors were preparing, the faithful servants of God were engaged in their devotions to Him. That is why the incense and prayer are combined in this verse.

Verse 4. The odor of incense was pleasing to God in the days when such services were required (Exodus 30: 7-9; Leviticus 16: 12, 13). and likewise the prayers of faithful servants in the Christian Dispensation are acceptable (1 Peter 3: 12).

Verse 5. *Filled it with fire off the altar*. In the Mosaic system the priest

obtained the fire from the brazen altar with which to burn the incense. The angel followed the same pattern in the symbolical performance, except that after having used some fire for the burning of incense before the golden altar, he got some more fire which he put in the censer (a portable fumigator) and cast it into the earth. This aroused voices like the sound of thunders which were the complaints of the foes of truth at the prospect of God's judgment about to come upon them. So mighty and widespread were these murmurings that John likened them to an earthquake.

Verse 6. The half hour silence is about to end and the four winds are about to be released; the first four angels with trumpets are about to sound.

Verse 7. It should be remembered through verse 12 that the plagues symbolized represent the reverses that came upon the Roman Empire which finally resulted in the downfall of the government. The items mentioned are figurative or symbolic, but they are worded as if literal calamities were being imposed. That is because in a book where certain facts of an immaterial character are predicted in symbols, the events have to be reported as if they were happening literally. Thus we have a hail and electrical storm that causes bloodshed and scorching of much of the vegetation.

Verse 8. The judgments of God against the Empire continue as the second angel sounds his trumpet. *Great mountain burning* signifies the downfall of some unit of the government. *Cast into the sea* symbolizes the people (represented by the sea) as feeling the effects of this political downfall. *Sea became blood* signifies that much bloodshed was suffered among the people caused by the internal disturbances.

Verse 9. All of this is figurative because the literal sea and its vessels of traffic were unharmed by the political confusion. But it gives a picture of what did occur, and in stating an exact percentage as dying we will understand that a great portion suffered but the government was not exterminated.

Verse 10. No change in the general drama takes place, but some special incident is predicted to affect the people unfavorably. A *star* in symbolical language denotes some leader, and he is here likened to a meteor that falls

to the earth, selecting as its landing place the rivers and fountains of water. That is attacking a vital portion of a country because of the necessity of water.

Verse 11. The name of this star was *Wormwood*. That is from the Greek word *apsinthos*, which Thayer defines, "wormwood, absinthe." Webster's definition of the word is as follows: "A green alcoholic liquor containing oils of wormwood and anise, and other aromatics. Its continued use causes nervous derangement." It is no wonder, then, that *many men died of the waters*.

Verse 12. *Third part* is commented upon at verse 9. This angel gave a sound that resulted in throwing all the luminaries out of order, pitching the country into a state of semi-darkness. It was another shake-up among the leaders of the empire.

Verse 13. The things which happened to the country, when the four winds were turned loose or when the angels sounded, seemed bad enough if that was to be the end of the troubles. But it was not, for there came another angel flying through *the midst of heaven*, which denotes that he came into the region of the political heavens of the Roman Empire. He pronounced a triple woe on the people to come when the remaining three angels sound their trumpets. Let us bear in mind that we are still reading of things that were revealed when the seventh seal was broken.

### Revelation 9

Verse 1. It is fair to my readers to state that a number of commentators connect this chapter with Mohammed. In reasoning upon the subject some of them will mention certain things that could not have been true of any persons but the soldiers of Mohammed. But in their reasoning I note that the chief basis of their argument is the idea that the literal characteristics of locusts and horses and soldiers, etc., will not agree with any interpretation except to apply the predictions to Mohammed. But we are in a book of symbols where it does not count for a conclusion to rely on the literal nature of things. On the principle of "giving others the benefit of the doubt," I am sure there were many facts and truths about Mohammedanism that correspond with the language of the several verses. Yet that could truly be said of some other noted impostors who

have come into the world to poison the minds of men. The scope of history is so wide that one might find incidents to correspond with various characters he would select for the comparison. Against all of the above considerations I am keeping in mind that the Lord was concerned principally with the experiences of His people in connection with the Roman Empire, and the great apostasy that was formed by the corruption of His system with its union of church and state. In view of the aforesaid remarks I shall devote my comments to the items that were and are being fulfilled by the doings of the institution of Rome. *Star fall from heaven* is rendered "out of heaven fallen" by The Englishman's Greek New Testament. It denotes that John saw a star (symbol for a leader among men) that was in fallen condition, not that he saw it fall. That would be true of the head of Rome; he had fallen from the spiritual purity that exists in heavenly things. *Bottomless pit* is from *abussos*, which is explained at Luke 8: 31 in the first volume of New Testament Commentary.

Verse 2. We have learned that the bottomless pit is the abode of demons (usually translated "devils" in the King James Version). These demons were suffered to come into the world at one time and afflict mankind. After that period was gone it was easy to refer to such a performance as a symbol of other activities in the politico-religious world, namely, the institution in which the church and state were united. Since this great apostate organization served the interests of Satan so much, it was appropriate to represent the Roman bishop as having a joint interest with him in opposing the true servants of God. Paul verifies this conclusion in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9 where he says: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." Literally we would think of smoke coming out of a place where there is a flame of fire (Luke 16: 24), but it is used symbolically which will be developed as the chapter proceeds.

Verse 3. We still have symbols but they are more definite. The smoke proves to have been a "smoke screen" that enclosed a swarm of locusts. That explained why the sun was darkened by the "smoke" in the preceding verse. It has been known many times that this insect comes in such great numbers as to have the effect of a cloud

that obscures the sun. In selecting a symbol the Lord would call attention to some literal fact that would truly represent some other fact or truth that is not literal. This swarm of locusts was the clergy of Rome acting on behalf of the apostate church, otherwise called Babylon the Great. As the swarm of locusts obscured the sun so the clergy of Rome would prevent the people from having the full benefit of the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4: 2). *Scorpions* is described by Thayer as follows: "The name of a little animal, somewhat resembling a lobster, which in warm regions [such as Hades, E.M.Z.] lurks especially in stone walls; it has a poisonous sting in its tail."

Verse 4. Here we have another instance where the Lord uses a literal object to symbolize a fact that is not literal, except that He uses the symbol contrary to its usual behavior. This is not the only instance where a performance in nature is used "contrary" to its usual manner. (See Romans 11: 24.) The natural thing is for the locusts to eat the very things this verse says they did not hurt. They were to hurt men only and not all of them even. Their destructive work was to be against the *men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads*. Such men were true servants of God and no kind of oppression could actually hurt them. But on the principle that "evil sometimes works its own rebuke," the Lord suffers the workers of iniquity to be scourged by their own leaders. It is a historical fact that the dupes of Rome often suffer many hardships at the hands of the clergy. The writer of this paragraph knew a family in which a small son was compelled to earn money, half of which was taken from him by the clergy though his widowed mother was much in need of it.

Verse 5. *Not kill them*. The clergy needed to retain their dupes that they might further exploit them for their own selfish interests. *Five months* is a definite period of time if taken literally, but in actual history we do not find such processes as have been described being so exact in their beginning and ending. The figure refers to some particular period in the history of the apostate church when the oppression by the clergy was active to an extraordinary degree.

Verse 6. *Seek death and shall not find it*. There are some things worse

than death (Jeremiah 8: 3). I once heard a lecture by a woman who had escaped from the clutches of Rome. In that lecture the speaker related the experiences of a woman who was being tortured as a result of self-inflicted wounds induced by the heresies of Rome. This victim moaned and sighed as if death at once would have been a relief.

Verse 7. It was fitting that these locusts were in the form resembling war horses, for the apostate institution has not hesitated at using carnal warfare for its defense whenever it was thought necessary. *Crown of gold* indicates both authority and wealth, and the clergy of Rome have ever been equipped with both, in order to carry out the schemes of the headquarters of the corrupt organization. *Faces of men* is an important identification also, because while the use of war horses is necessary in the program of Rome, it also requires the scheming trickery of human intelligence.

Verse 8. *Hair of women . . . teeth of lions*; this is a very interesting combination. In 1 Corinthians 11: 15 it is shown that women are expected to have long hair (that being the only distinction between the hair of women and that of men as far as the appearance is concerned.) Women are supposed to be milder and less harmful in their natural disposition. Hence when these creatures first appear they are regarded as women and thus would not be suspected as being such as needed to be avoided. But they had teeth like those of lions which indicates that they were in reality a dangerous group of creatures. That is a true picture of the clergy of Rome, including all from the pope down to the humblest priest.

Verse 9. A *breastplate* is a piece for the protection of the vital parts of the body. The apostate church stood behind its clergy and gave them all the protection necessary. *Sound of their wings*. The locusts have wings literally and since the symbolism is still drawn from those insects it is appropriate to mention that part of their anatomy. Yet we know it is not to be taken literally, for the rest of the verse represents them sounding like war chariots drawn by horses going into battle.

Verse 10. This is the same as verses 3 and 4.

Verse 11. See the remarks at verse 1 for the meaning of *bottomless pit*.



The angel of this place would mean some outstanding character who was in partnership with the influences of that domain. The capitalized words of this verse are used by John as proper nouns, but in Bible times most names of persons had special meaning. That of the ones in this verse means "destroyer," and it is certainly an appropriate name in view of the destructive work and tendencies of the leaders of Rome. This *king* or *angel* would be either the pope or some special member of the clergy who had unusual success in controlling the others. It is noteworthy that John connects this evil arrangement with the *bottomless pit* which is the abode of fallen angels called demons.

Verse 12. *Two woes more* is a reference to the statement of the angel in chapter 8: 13, who announced that three woes more were to be pronounced against the inhabitants of the earth. One of them has been announced and two more are waiting to be sounded.

Verse 13. The golden altar was in the first room of the tabernacle and placed by the vail that separated the second room. Just through the vail was the ark where God met with the high priest to speak to him. Hence the voice John heard was coming from the presence of God.

Verse 14. The voice was giving instructions to the sixth angel. The river Euphrates is a significant subject in connection with God's people. The ancient city of Babylon was situated on its banks, which was the capital of the first of the four world empires. The word "babylon" came to mean confusion and was finally applied to the great institution of the apostate church, concerning which we are now reading in our studies. It was fitting, therefore, that these four angels should be represented being located in this river. The particular events which they were to announce are not named, but the train of happenings is not interrupted. It means that the disciplinary treatment which the dupes of Rome were suffered to have come upon them was continuing. It will be well now to read the comments at 2 Thessalonians 2: 11, 12. There it will be seen that God sent certain judgments upon the citizens of the apostate institution, using their own people and practices as the instrument by which judgments were to be sent. That is what is going on in our

chapter, and the four angels are merely some of the specific agencies within the corrupt institution for this epoch in the punishments.

Verse 15. The *hour, day, month* and *year* are exact periods of time when literally considered, but they are to be understood in the same light as "five months" in verse 5 which the reader should see. Likewise he should see the comments at chapter 8: 9 for the meaning of *third part*.

Verse 16. The number of the army is another exact figure if taken literally, but the meaning is that a great army was serving the interests of the evil institution. *And I heard the number of them*. The conjunction *and* is not in all copies and it is unnecessary, for the sentence means that John was not sizing up the army personally but the number was announced to him.

Verse 17. Some commentators see an invasion of heathen armies into the domain of the Roman Empire. No doubt things of that nature took place at certain times through the centuries. However, the fundamental background of the vision being shown to John has not been changed, hence I believe all these descriptive phrases are symbolical of the fierceness of the judgments which the dupes of Rome brought upon themselves. For that reason I shall not attempt any further comments on the descriptions.

Verse 18. See the comments at chapter 8: 9 for the significance of *third part*.

Verse 19. These creatures were invested with powers at the two extremities of their bodies, which indicates how complete was the agency that God suffered to come upon the citizens of the corrupt organization.

Verse 20. The worship of devils and other forms of idolatry that are mentioned refers to the worship of dead "saints" that was practiced by the members of the apostate church. They also introduced images into their churches and they would fall down before them (even as they do in our day) which constituted the idol worship condemned here. *Repented not*. Notwithstanding all the hardships that had been brought upon the leaders and many of their followers by their corrupt practices, the others (*rest of the men*) did not "learn their lesson" so as to be induced to repent.

Verse 21. These are literal crimes which doubtless many of them com-

mitted, for it is well established that the apostate church deals in all of such means to further the interests of the corrupt institution.

### Revelation 10

Verse 1. The drama of the book of Revelation is proceeding down through the centuries, until we are about to arrive at the revolution known in history as the Reformation. But the full development of that mighty movement will be preceded by some items preparatory to it. Now is another time when the reader should again read carefully the "General remarks" at the beginning of this book. But the oppression from the power that was created through the union of church and state has exhausted the patience of the Almighty and he will soon inaugurate the work that is destined to dissolve the unrighteous monster and return to the people their right to act upon their own responsibility. The preliminary events necessary for the main performance are due to begin soon, which will be indicated by some of the symbols of this chapter. The angel in this verse came down from heaven and the description shows he was coming on behalf of the Lord to impart some predictions about to be carried out. *Clothed with a cloud* agrees with the fact that he was from the courts of heaven, because the clouds are frequently used in connection with heavenly events (chapter 1: 7; 14: 14; Matthew 24:30; Acts 1: 9; 1 Thessalonians 4: 17). *Rainbow upon his head* signifies the dignity and grandeur of his mission. His face like the sun denotes great light which was especially appropriate since his mission was to announce the shedding of Gospel light on those who had been deprived of it because of the Dark Ages. *Pillars of fire*. Thayer explains this to mean. "Flames rising like columns." It denotes a penetrating brilliance that belongs only to heavenly beings.

Verse 2. The angel had a *little book* which indicated that the events about to be predicted would not take long and hence would not require a large book to record them. The book was *open* which signified that the things about to happen were to be made known; that their account was not a sealed book as the one in chapter 2. It denoted further that the Bible which had been closed to the people by Rome would soon be opened again so that all might read. The *sea* and

*earth* comprise the entire surface of the globe and the symbol means that all the world would be affected by what was soon to occur and which would be announced presently.

Verse 3. The angel's voice was like that of a lion in that it was strong and itself heard far and near. We know from the context that the angel's cry was the announcement that the Bible was again to be given to the people. Of course that would be unwelcome news to the heads of the apostate church and it was natural for them to protest. That called for *seven thunders* from the "seven-hilled" city of Rome.

Verse 4. Not realizing the deception there was in the protests, John was about to write down what the thunderous voices said. (We remember he was told in chapter 1: 19 to write the things that should be thereafter.) But the Lord understood the motive of the seven voices coming from the headquarters of the "man of sin," and He caused a voice to instruct John not to record them but to seal them up.

Verse 5. In lifting up his hand the angel mentioned before (in verse 2) was preparing to make an oath. (There is no inconsistency in this, for he was an angel of God and man only is forbidden to make oaths.)

Verse 6. *Should be time no longer*. Much misuse has been of this passage. It is not uncommon to hear a preacher making an earnest plea to his audience to obey the Gospel while the time is here. That soon the angel of God would place one foot on land and the other on the sea and declare that "time shall be no longer." They thus make the phrase mean that the last day of the earth has come and hence it will be "the end of time." In the first place the events concerning which the angel uttered the phrase were several centuries prior to the second coming of Christ. In the second place the Bible does not teach there will ever be an end of time, for the word means the same as the word "eternity," and both words simply mean "duration" which is something that had no beginning and will never have an end. The word in our passage does not mean "time" as being the opposite of "eternity," but it has the same meaning the word would have if a moderator announced to the speaker that his time was up. The Englishman's Greek New Testament renders the word "delay." The passage means that the events

being predicted—the events getting ready for the Reformation—were about due to start and that there would be no longer delay in the matter.

Verse 7. *The mystery of God* refers to the work of the Reformation that was to restore the Bible to the people. The seventh angel has not yet sounded, but he soon will because the preceding verse says there was not to be any further delay. By the time this seventh angel gets his message sounded the complete work of the Reformation will be done, that is, the prediction will be completed. Of course an inspired prophet speaks of things in the present tense even though he is speaking of events long in the future. John was seeing this vision in the first century and the Reformation came in the sixteenth, but an inspired angel can speak of such an event as having taken place. Such is the meaning of this verse when it says that *when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished*. (See chapter 11: 15.)

Verse 8. This *little book* is the one mentioned in verse 2 which contains predictions of things about to begin. John was the human agency of God for delivering the message to the world, and hence it was appropriate for him to receive the book at the bidding of the angel. We note two angels are involved in this episode, the one that held the book and the other one that sounded the instructions to John.

Verse 9. In obedience to the instructions of the angel John went and requested the other angel to give him the little book. As the angel delivered it to him he told him to *eat it up*. This was a symbol and indicated that John was to be inspired to report to the people. A similar instance of such a symbolic inspiration of a prophet is in Ezekiel 3: 1-3. The book produced two opposite effects upon the prophet although he had only one body to absorb it. There was nothing inconsistent in John's personal attitude toward the word of God, but the world would not take the same stand in view of the unpleasant things it contains in its teachings. Therefore John was required to have a bodily experience that represented both his and the people's reaction to the word. See the note about "prophets acting" at 1 Kings 20: 35 in Volume 2 of Bible Commentary.

Verse 10. John took the book and ate it with the results that he was told what would happen within his body.

Verse 11. We are sure that the effects of eating the book included the reactions of the world, for this verse refers to the subject in direct connection with his eating it. The instruction explains why he was to eat the book, and why it had the mentioned effects, namely, that he was to *prophesy* again before many peoples, etc. Incidentally, this last statement shows that the one in verse 6 that there should *be time no longer*, does not mean that the end of the world had come.

### Revelation 11

Verse 1. The reed given unto John was a measuring rule and is a symbol of the word of God. This is clear from the fact that the angel gave it to John who was one of the apostles. We know the word of God is the divine standard for it is required in 1 Peter 4: 11 that, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." At the time predicted by this chapter the apostasy ("falling away") was an established fact. The Bible was virtually taken from the people and the religious lives of men and women were judged by the decrees of Rome instead of by the word of God. This verse is a symbol of the true standard of the measurement as the apostles were given the authority to execute (Matthew 19: 28). The *temple of God* means the church (1 Corinthians 3: 16, 17). The altar was the center of worship in the Mosaic system, and it is referred to here as a symbol of the worship under that of Christ. *Them that worship therein* means Christians, whose personal lives must be measured (regulated) by the word of God and not by the decrees of Rome.

Verse 2. The *court* in the old temple was the part that was open to the people generally. It is referred to in our passage as a symbol of the treatment that was imposed upon the institution of God by its enemies. Under the Mosaic system the temple was under the jurisdiction of the Jews, and that is why those on the outside were called Gentiles. But in the fulfillment of the symbol the word refers to the enemies of the true church, namely, the leaders in the church of Rome. It must be borne in mind that all through this part of the book of Revelation, when reference is made either to Rome, or Babylon, or church and state, the same

institution is always meant (if no exception is stated). That is because it was by the union of church and state that such a complete control was obtained over all the lives of the people. That is what is meant by the prediction that they were to *tread under foot* these arrangements of God. It is important to note that they did not tread under foot the temple nor the altar. That is because all through the Dark Ages there was a true church in existence in spite of the corruptions of Rome, although it was obscured more or less from the full public view. *Forty and two months*. This is the first time this unit of time has appeared in this book, but it will reappear many times under various figures. It refers to the period of the apostasy or Dark Ages as it is familiarly termed by the teachers in the brotherhood. In literal terms it means 1260 years and the various forms in which it is stated will all sum up to that figure by observing the rule in prophetic language that the month has 30 days. The exact number of years that requires the 60 is reached by the dates on which the full rule of Rome began and ended. Some of the details of that subject are not available to me at present, but we may be sure that the figure is correct from the fact that each of the various forms in which it is stated brings out the same 1260. And as to the correctness of the calculation we have historical verification of the round number in the words of Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He was an infidel and would have no motive for verifying the word of God, but he was an authentic historian whose ability and accuracy were unquestioned and I shall quote from him as follows: "In the long period of twelve hundred years, which elapsed between the reign of Constantine and the reformation of Luther, the worship of saints and relics corrupted the pure and perfect simplicity of the Christian model; and some symptoms of degeneracy may be observed even in the first generation which adopted and cherished this pernicious innovation."—Volume 2, Chapter 28, Page 615. The *forty and two months* of our verse gives us the 1260 by multiplying forty-two by thirty.

Verse 3. The word *power* is not in the Greek and is not necessary for the thought, which is that God would see that His two witnesses could speak. The two witnesses are the Old and New

Testaments, the documents that Rome took away from the people. To *prophecy* is from *PROPHETEUEO* and Thayer's general definition is, "Speak forth by divine inspiration." Hence it includes the making of predictions and any form of speech that will impart information that is in harmony with the will of God. The word in our passage means that the Old and New Testaments would continue to exist and offer their information through the period designated. In symbolic language a day stands for a year (Ezekiel 4: 6), hence the number of days named with words corresponds with the 1260 years. *Clothed in sackcloth* symbolizes a condition of mourning, and it is used in this verse to refer to the mistreatment the word of God would receive all through the Dark Ages.

Verse 4. Olive oil was the chief source of artificial light in Bible times (Exodus 27: 20; Leviticus 24: 2). Olive oil requires olive trees and hence since the word of God is the only source of spiritual light directly available to man, it is symbolized by olive trees. The phraseology in the last part of the verse is drawn from Zechariah 4: 11-14.

Verse 5. *If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth, etc.* Both sentences of this verse mean the same. We know that no one was ever literally injured by the Bible, hence we must understand this to be a symbol. Its meaning is that God is jealous for his word and will inflict vengeance upon all who oppose it. In times of "special providence" He caused various judgments to come upon men who mistreated the divine word. Otherwise the time will come when eternal punishment will be inflicted upon all who have not given the word of God the respect it deserves.

Verse 6. This verse is to be understood in the light of the preceding one. God is so jealous of his word that if He deems it called for he will inflict such judgments as these upon those who mistreat His word.

Verse 7. *Finished their testimony* does not mean they quit testifying for they will not do that while the world stands. It means when their testimony has been made complete—when the New Testament is all written. When John was writing it had not all been composed yet, for the book he was writing was to be a part of that Volume. About the time the whole Bible was composed and confirmed, which was after all the apostles had passed from life, was the time that

Rome became alarmed at the influence of the Bible. Also that was near the time that the union of church and state arrived at its great height, in which it obtained such power as to control all the people under its dominions. We understand the *beast* to be Satan operating through the power of Rome. Shall *kill them* is figurative because the Bible never was actually killed, but as far as its opportunity for control over the lives of men was concerned the Book was slain. Let the reader remember that it is the two witnesses of verse 3 that the present verse is dealing with.

Verse 8. *Dead bodies* must be understood in the light of the comments on the preceding verse. We know the literal truth is that Rome was the institution that mistreated the Bible and took it away from the people. For that reason the symbols in this verse must be interpreted accordingly. The city is the domain of the apostate church, and the reference to Sodom and Egypt is made because of the wickedness that was in those places and their enmity against the Lord. The Lord's crucifixion also is laid to the same kind of elements that plotted the attack upon the Bible.

Verse 9. The Bible continued to be a prohibited book all through the Dark Ages or the 1260 years. That is the period represented here by *three days and a half*. The term is obtained by reducing three and a half years to days (1260), then remembering that a day in symbolic language stands for a year. *Not suffer . . . put in graves*. A refusal to give burial to a body that has been slain would indicate much disrespect for the body. The figure is used to denote the low esteem the church of Rome had for the word of God.

Verse 10. The teaching of the Bible stands in the way of the evil desires of men who wish to profit by a misuse of the religion of Christ which they profess to follow. It torments them as the verse states it, and therefore it would be a cause for rejoicing among such people to have it put out of the way. *Two prophets* are other terms for the Old and New Testament. It was a custom to exchange gifts upon occasions of special rejoicing which was a form of mutual congratulations. (See Nehemiah 8:12 and Esther 9:22.)

Verse 11. *After three days and a half* means after the Dark Ages of 1260 (verse 9). *Spirit of life* is figurative

on the same principle as being dead in verse 7. The apostate church took the Bible away from the people and "slew" it. Luther and his co-workers gave it back to the people which put "life" back into it.

Verse 12. This is another symbolical passage for in fact the Bible was already in heaven. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89). The passage gives a symbolical performance that was to notify the enemies of the word of God that the forces of Heaven were recognizing it and were ready to welcome its renewed power on the earth. We know that such is the purpose of the verse for the closing statement is *and their enemies beheld them*.

Verse 13. *Earthquakes* in symbolic language stand for revolutions in governments and the powers that be. When the work of the reformers got underway it caused many disturbances among the rulers of the world, who had been holding undisputed sway over the people through the past centuries. The numerical units that are mentioned—*tenth part* and *seven thousand*—are too exact to be taken literally. The meaning is that a great part of the former tyrannies was overthrown. *Remnant . . . gave glory to God*. When the work of the reformers became an established fact, it convinced some of the leaders that they had been in the wrong and were thus led to acknowledge their mistake. *Were affrighted* means they were compelled to feel a greater respect for God and his Book than they had before.

Verse 14. *Second woe is past*. The first was the scourge of the Dark Ages, the second was the dissolving of the union of church and state which was connected with the giving of the Bible back to the people. The third woe (not to God's people but to the enemies) is the resumption of power by the several kings and rulers, who had been deprived of their royal rights by the dominating power in Rome, that forced all people to be subject to its dictates.

Verse 15. Kingdoms of the world are not asked to become part of the kingdom of Christ. That would be virtually another union of church and state. What happened was a change in the attitude of the earthly kingdoms. Before the Reformation the kings on those thrones could not reign as Christ would have wished them to and as they personally would have been inclined.

They had to take their instructions from Rome and rule their subjects as that head dictated. After the delusion was lifted by the insight into the scriptures that was afforded them through the work of the reformers, they learned that they could permit their subjects to regulate their own religious life as they believed Christ wished them to. It is in that sense that the kingdoms *of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord*. Such a revolution was a woe to the "man of sin" in Rome for it meant the end of his arrogant rule. It is the third woe already predicted and now announced by the sounding of the seventh angel. *He shall reign for ever and ever*. Christ never ceased to be a king from the time He ascended to his Father's right hand (1 Peter 3: 22), and will continue to be king until the time of His second coming (1 Corinthians 15: 24, 25). But He was not recognized as king by these earthly rulers while they were under the control of Rome.

Verse 16. These are the four and twenty elders of chapter 4: 4. They rejoiced to see the triumph of Him who was and is the saving virtue of both of the organized systems of religion given into the world by the Lord.

Verse 17. *Taken to thee thy great power* refers to the triumph of righteousness over evil when the word God was given back to the people of the various kingdoms.

Verse 18. *Nations were angry*. That is that part of them that still wished to profit by the deception of the people. *Thy wrath is come* means that God's vengeance had come upon the apostate church for abusing His word. *The time of the dead* also hath come, meaning the dead whose souls John saw under the altar (chapter 6: 9). They cried for vengeance or judgment and were told that "their time" would come. Now that time has come and God has *judged* the apostate church by separating her from the advantages of temporal power. At the same time He *gave reward* to his faithful servants by having His word placed again in their hands. *Destroy them which destroy the earth* refers to the same evil men described before who planned to destroy (corrupt in the margin) the earth.

Verse 19. This verse is a symbol that is very significant. The Bible had been denied the people for 1260 years but is now restored to them. That is like letting the servants of God "in" on a

great intimacy with the Lord. The original law was laid up by the ark in the Most Holy Place (Exodus 25: 16; Deuteronomy 10: 2). The people were never permitted to see into that place where the book of God was deposited. Likewise the people under Rome were shut off from seeing the Book through the years of the apostasy. But the work of the Reformation broke through that and forced open the privacy and gave them another view of the law. As an illustration of such a privilege John was given a view into the place where the ark was which he calls the *ark of his testament* or holy law. The *lightnings* and other things named refer to the commotions that were caused by the Reformation.

### Revelation 12

Verse 1. As an aid in identifying this *woman* we will learn that she is the one who lived through the 1260 years of the apostasy (verse 6). That was not true in any sense of Mary the mother of Jesus. Besides, Mary was a literal woman and we are studying in a book of symbols. We should also remember that the apostate church as opposed to the Lord's institution is the outstanding subject of this book, and of course that of necessity is the church of Christ. *Clothed with the sun* symbolizes the light of divine truth with which the church has been entrusted (Ephesians 3: 10; 1 Timothy 3: 15). As the moon is a lesser light than the sun, so there are those in the church who are light bearers *under* the jurisdiction of the church. *Crown of twelve stars* evidently refers to the apostles. A crown indicates a position of rulership or judgeship. Accordingly we read of Jesus saying to his apostles, "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19: 28).

Verse 2. This verse describes the mother, but the literal facts are symbols of something that is not literal.

Verse 3. When a birth is expected in a family the members thereof are generally hovering near, impatiently waiting for the happy event. But in the case of this woman there is a being waiting near who is not friendly toward the event. This being is called *a great red dragon*. He is called Satan in other places and that is because he works through agencies that belong to this world. The dragon of our verse, then, is Rome. Some commentators designate that it means Pagan Rome



but I do not believe it is to be restricted to that. However, since both Pagan and Papal Rome had their headquarters in the city of Rome, it will not make any difference as far as this verse is concerned, which angle of the subject we take. The description of the dragon in this verse agrees with the government of Rome with the leading European kingdoms that were connected with it and formed a part of the institution as a whole. The seven heads are so numbered because the city of Rome literally has seven hills on which it is situated. But those seven hills are not important except as symbols of something else not literal or at least not material. They represent the sevenfold power of that mighty institution in opposing the works of God. The ten horns are the same that Daniel saw (Daniel 7: 7), and they correspond to the ten toes of the giant image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Verse 4. *Third part of the stars* means the men in positions of importance. The reason why only a portion of them was drawn is the same as other similar passages, namely, God has never suffered the enemy to annihilate completely that which he attacks. This dragon is standing by expecting to destroy the child as soon as it is born.

Verse 5. When the child was born it was a *man child*. In preceding chapters we have seen that the outstanding feature of Rome, as well as of other despotic governments, is the hatred of people who wish to have a voice in their own government. As long as the people can be kept in ignorance of their personal rights, they will meekly submit and be ruled over. But the Bible in its clear method of showing people their personal responsibility in determining their manner of conduct, has taught them the truth about it and led them to notify Rome to keep hands off. But the Bible is not a self-propagating document, hence the church was the Lord's instrument for bringing that great truth into the world. In symbolizing that revolutionary event the Lord gave the vision to John of a woman nearing the time of delivery of a child so near in fact that the pains of the event had started. The child may conveniently and truly be called "self-determination" in the light of what has been just shown on the subject of personal responsibility and the right to discharge it without the interference of a dictatorial monarchy. The

church as Christ and the apostles set it up, taught men not to call any man "father" upon earth (Matthew 23: 9). It taught that all men were to consult the word of God for their guidance (James 1: 25). That the Lord's servants are to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4: 11), and that means that every man will be able to read and "interpret" the word for himself and not have to take dictation from some supreme authority independent of his own responsibility. When men learned these truths they rebelled at the idea of world monarchies. That is the reason Daniel predicted that the stone cut out of the mountain—the kingdom set up by the God of heaven—was to put an end to world power. (Daniel 2: 44.) It is no wonder, then, that the dragon wanted to kill this man child. *Rule with a rod of iron*. This may sound severe but iron is not necessarily harsh or cruel, it means it is strong and durable. *Child was caught up* is another symbol. If a babe was born that was at once surrounded with dangerous conditions so that the mother would have to flee to some place for safety, some kind hearted friends would take care of the infant. Accordingly, when the church was driven into the wilderness, her child "self-determination," was watched over by the kind Father in heaven to see that it would live through all those years of the apostasy.

Verse 6. This *wilderness* was the period of the Dark Ages where the length of it is given in words and which is the same 1260 that the other computations give. All through that period the true church was alive but was in comparative obscurity because of the oppressive domination of the institution of Rome with its union of church and state. But her child—the spirit of self-determination—was alive and tenderly watched over by an infinite Guardian, and was destined some day to "make his mark in the world" upon the return of his mother from the wilderness.

Verse 7. *War in heaven*. We must keep in mind that everything being described is symbolic and shown to John right there on that isle of Patmos. But also we should not forget that inspired symbols stand for actual facts and truths. This war was not the first conflict that the forces of heaven had had with Satan for Jesus said he saw him fall from heaven (Luke 10: 18). And Paul tells us what was the cause of the first conflict, namely, his

pride (1 Timothy 3: 6). Ever since that event he has been the bitter enemy of heaven and all that pertains thereto, never losing an opportunity of getting in his evil work. Now when he sees this expectant mother in heaven (verse 1) he is determined to start a war over it. Just why or how the devil could be present in the vicinity of the angels is not told us in detail, but we know from Job 1: 6 and 2: 1 that he has been suffered in the past to be present at gatherings of the angels before God. But the time Jesus saw him fall as cited in Luke was not on the occasion of this war, for the angels who won in the war ascribed the victory to the blood of the Lamb, and when Jesus said he saw Satan fall from heaven was before He had shed his blood. Hence this war was just another attempt of Satan to get in his wicked work and head off the plan of the Lord to give to the world a religion free from the entanglements of worldly despotism, and the selfish ambition of wicked men. It was fitting that Michael should be the angel to lead the forces of heaven against Satan, for he is called "one of the chief princes" in Daniel 10: 13, and chapter 12: 1 of that same book says that he is the prince that "standeth for the children of thy people."

Verse 8. Satan was defeated and *neither was their place found any more in heaven*. This means that the enemy not only was vanquished but driven from the field.

Verse 9. Satan was cast out *and his angels were cast out with him*. This agrees with 2 Peter 2: 4 and Jude 6, and also explains why Jesus speaks of the devil's angels in Matthew 25: 41. Satan is called *that old serpent* because he used that beast as his agent in Genesis 3: 1-4. *Deceiveth the whole world* does not mean that every person in the world is deceived for there are exceptions. The thought is that all deception that is in the world is to be attributed to him.

Verse 10. It was perfectly logical that the righteous persons should rejoice over the defeat of Satan. *Now is come* is their way of saying that the *kingdom of our God* was given another victory through the *power of his Christ*. *Accuser of our brethren*. The specific accusation is not stated, but since it was a daily performance we may conclude that it refers to the general opposition that Satan has always

waged against the Lord and his faithful servants.

Verse 11. The pronoun *they* stands for "our brethren" in the preceding verse, who are said to have overcome Satan in the *war* that was fought in heaven. Verse 7 says that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. There is no conflict in the statements which show that the forces of heaven are always ready to join in any battle with the forces of evil. This recalls the statement of Paul in Hebrews 1: 14 that the angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." *Overcame him by the blood of the Lamb*. The blood had brought them the hope of salvation and that hope gave them the courage to fight Satan. *By the word of their testimony*. They persisted in their defence of the testimony of Jesus and that helped to put Satan to flight. James 4: 7 says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." *Loved not their lives unto death*. Their faith in the righteousness of their Master's cause was so strong that even the threat or presence of death could not dampen their zeal. (See Matthew 10: 28.) An army of such soldiers can rout the fiercest attacks of Satan.

Verse 12. These happy victors are bidding all the domain of intelligent creatures to rejoice over the situation. However, while the devil has lost this battle, he has not been put out of existence but will use every opportunity that appears for opposing the friends of truth. For this reason the inhabitants of *earth and sea* are given warning of what to expect. There are literally no creatures in the sea in which Satan is interested. The phrase is a figure of speech that means all creatures everywhere will be the victims of Satan's hatred. *Hath but a short time*. Whatever Satan accomplishes against the spiritual interests of mankind must be done while the world stands. After that he and his angels will be cast into the lake of eternal fire from which they will never escape even temporarily.

Verse 13. *Was cast unto the earth*. The attempts of Satan against the forces of heaven were completely overthrown. That left only the territory of the earth for future operations, and as a persistent general he began at once to carry out his wicked strategy. His objective was to persecute the woman (the church) who had given

birth to the man child, namely, the principle of "self-determination."

Verse 14. This is a repetition of verse 6 with the additional information about the *two wings* that were given her. They are symbols and refers to the Old and New Testament, for it is the word of God that sustains the church in all the trying scenes of this world. It is by this word the woman (the church) was to be *nourished* (given spiritual food) while she is in the wilderness. The length of her exile in the wilderness is the same actual period that has been stated elsewhere, only it is indicated with different figurative terms. The word "time" in figurative language means "year;" this is indicated in Daniel 4: 16; 7: 25; 12: 7. Our verse calls for *time* (one), *times* (two) and *half a time*. It sums up three and a half times or years. Multiply 360 by three and a half and you have 1260, the period of the Dark Ages.

Verse 15. Sometimes when specific temptations do not make the desired "dent" in the character of a Christian, he may be finally overcome by an avalanche of afflictions. The devil (in the form of a serpent) tried this last method on the church. It was symbolized by having the devil cast a flood of water out of his mouth, hoping to engulf the woman in it there being no way to escape due to its volume. The Roman Empire used both methods in opposing the Lord's people. Sometimes an outstanding instance would be used such as burning a man at the stake or nailing some disciple to a cross. Then again the government would let loose a wholesale sweep of persecutions.

Verse 16. In the case of a flood there would appear to be no possible way of escape. But an unexpected opening in the earth let the water down and the woman was thereby saved. Likewise it happens that when matters seem to be at a crisis, and when "no earthly help is nigh," something will occur to defeat the enemy and rescue the would-be victim.

Verse 17. If the devil fails to make a wholesale destruction of the church, he will work on as many of the individual members as he can contact. This is the only explanation I can see that will harmonize the parts of this verse which might seem to be in difficulty. The woman (the church) is made up of individual disciples, and to attack one is to attack the other. Yet there is a distinction between the

church as a whole and the individual members thereof. Paul said "ye are the body of Christ, and member in particular" (1 Corinthians 12: 27).

### Revelation 13

Verse 1. It is very important that the reader take the time to read carefully the "general remarks" at the beginning of this book. He should note especially the information concerning the changes that took place in the Roman Empire due to its different state religions. A brief mention of them is all the space that can be used here, namely, Pagan Rome means the empire while its religion was the pagan or heathen. Papal Rome means when the state religion was the Papal or that under the pope. There is another item that should be stated in order to avoid confusion. The events that are described in the book of Revelation are not all given in the strict order of their occurrence. For instance, the present chapter opens with a vision of Pagan Rome which we know was before the days of Constantine. That means also that it was before the beginning of the Dark Ages of 1260 years. Yet we have already had a vision of that period even down to and including the Reformation of Luther, which is shown in chapter 11. This style of composition will be noticed in various places in this book. The vision will perhaps take the reader down the years through some important happenings, then go back many centuries and start all over again but with different symbols.

The *sea* is a symbol of humanity because all governments are products of human formation. The *beast* that John saw in this verse is Pagan Rome. The *seven heads* are explained at chapter 12: 3, referring to the literal or geographical fact that the city of Rome is situated upon seven hills. There is little or no importance attached to that except as a means of identification as to what city may be meant in the writings of some prophet or historian. If any political significance has been attached to the seven hills it would not affect the general plan of the book of Revelation. I believe that the Lord was concerned only with the outstanding subject of His church in its relation to both Pagan and Papal Rome, hence I have restricted my general considerations to that line. *Ten horns*. The Roman Empire was the fourth and last of the "four world

empires" as they are familiarly termed. Its head was in the city of Rome and the emperor was the ultimate ruler of the entire government. However, the various nations were subdivided into smaller kingdoms with their own local administration under a king, whose authority was only one in name for he was subject to the head in the city of Rome. The ten horns symbolize the outstanding ones in the domain of the Empire. The names that I have are England, Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal and Spain. *Name of blasphemy.* All of these kings were under the control and influence of Pagan Rome which was in opposition to the authority of the Lord, hence their language would be that of blasphemy (evil speaking) against Him.

Verse 2. There are some distinctive characteristics between a leopard, bear and lion, but they all have in common that of fierce destructiveness. Such a symbolism would be appropriate to represent the attitude of Pagan Rome against Christianity. *The dragon* (Satan, chapter 12: 9) *gave him his power* means the devil used his influence in favor of the beast of Rome. Satan has always been interested in supporting any institution that is an enemy of God.

Verse 3. There is much uncertainty among the commentators that I have consulted concerning the interpretation of this verse. The question is raised whether it means one of the ten horns, or that some part of the city was weakened, or that some one of the prominent emperors is meant. With such a state of variation among the able historians and commentators, I will offer only what I am sure will at least not conflict with the facts of history. In some way the government of Rome received a stroke that threatened to be fatal, until something was done that closed the breach and the threatened disaster was avoided. It must have been rather unusual for all the world wondered at the recovery from the wound.

Verse 4. *They* means the people of the world who worshipped the dragon (Satan) who gave his power to the *beast* (Pagan Rome). *Worship* is from a Greek word that means to do homage, not that any formal services were rendered. *They worshipped* the beast (Pagan Rome) which explains why they worshipped the dragon. They

were admirers of the beast and naturally would feel kindly toward any being that would give him some support. With all this background in favor of the beast, they asked in the spirit of challenge who was able to make war with him.

Verse 5. *There was given unto him.* When something is given there must be a giver either directly or indirectly. The preceding verse tells of the people of the world worshipping the beast, and hence it is reasonable to conclude that this power or permission to speak blasphemies was his by common consent. These are the same kind of blasphemous words that are mentioned in verse 1. *Continue forty and two months.* We recognize this to be the same period that is elsewhere mentioned and that it is the Dark Ages. An apparent difficulty may present itself here. It is well known that the Dark Ages of 1260 years was the result of the union of church and state, at which time the apostate church was come to power. But our present verse is still under the time of Pagan Rome, and hence the period of the forty two months should not be started yet. It is one of the cases where God charges the fruits of a thing to that thing itself. Pagan Rome started the work of persecuting the Christians, and when the apostate church came into power it formed another beast (the Papal) which "retired from active service" the other beast. But the new beast just followed after the pattern set by the first one—"exerciseth all the power of the first beast" (verse 12). John was enabled to look ahead and see this conduct of the second beast, and hence laid the blame of the forty and two months at the door of the first beast, considering him as morally responsible for it, even though the apostasy did not actually get under way until the first beast was "taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2: 7).

Verse 6. To blaspheme means to speak evil against that which is disliked. The leaders in Pagan Rome did not like the name of God nor the services of His *tabernacle* (the church), because He taught men they should not worship idols. Therefore they spoke against the divine institution that was on the earth, and against the beings in heaven who were servants of God.

Verse 7. *Was given unto him* has virtually the same meaning as a like phrase in verse 5. Also the Lord suf-

ferred these things to go on for the time being. *Overcome them*; this was true in two senses. He overpowered the faithful disciples with his ability to persecute them, even putting some of them to death. And he overcame some of them morally, such as were not steadfast in the faith. He also exercised a controlling influence over the lives of men in *all kindreds, and tongues, and nations*, because the Roman Empire was in power in all the so-called civilized world.

Verse 8. *All . . . shall worship him except those whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb.* In this passage the effect is named before the cause. These names were written in the book because they refused to worship the beast. It is another way of saying that the faithful servants of God refused to worship the Beast. *Slain from the foundation of the world.* The last word is from a Greek term that means the inhabitants of the earth, especially when they became a fixed order of intelligent beings composing a social world. Before that state of affairs came into existence, God saw the necessity for a plan of human redemption. Accordingly He devised one that was to be made effective through the sacrifice of his Son.

Verse 9. This language is a solemn call upon all to give profound attention. The things having been said and that are still to be said are of great importance to all mankind.

Verse 10. *He that leadeth . . . shall go*, etc. The verse is a statement of principle that is true in whatever domain of human activity it is considered. It is the rule of moral law and it is also true on the basis of cause and effect. It is the rule that Paul has in mind where he says, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6: 7). *Here is the patience and faith of the saints.* This means that when all these commotions are taking place under the wicked powers of the world, the saints (Christians) will have an opportunity of proving their faith and patience by remaining steadfast and true to the Lord.

Verse 11. The word *earth* like *sea* in verse 1 is used figuratively, referring to the people of the world because all governments on earth must be composed of human beings. *Another beast* is Papal Rome or the apostate church in connection with the state. A few

words of explanation of the term "pope" which means "universal father" according to the members of the apostate church. They regard the pope as their father or papa. When the letter *l* is added we have papal, making it an adjective meaning "of the pope." After Constantine adopted the religion professed by the bishop of the church (who later assumed the title of pope), the whole institution was thereafter known as Papal Rome. The beast of this verse had two horns which refers to the two parts of the empire, namely, church and state. *Spake as a dragon.* The apostate institution made the profession of Christianity but its decrees and communications to the people were prompted by the dragon (Satan). This is what Paul predicts in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9 where he describes the pope as follows: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders."

Verse 12. *Exerciseth all the power of the first beast* is commented upon in the remarks at verse 5. *Causeth . . . to worship the first beast.* Papal Rome was composed of church and state, and the two parts of that institution supported each other. The pope instructed his subjects that they must obey the orders of the state in all matters of conduct, even including their religious activities. *Whose deadly wound was healed.* (See the comments at verse 3.) The pope had a grateful remembrance of that episode in the affairs of state. Had the wound not been healed and the state had gone down, he would not then have the powerful support of the government to back him up in his wicked control over the lives of his people. So it is not strange that he directed them to *worship* that beast. That could not mean any formal ceremonies, the beast was not in existence in reality any way. It means for them to pay homage to the memory of the beast.

Verse 13. This verse is a statement of the false claims of the church of Rome, not that it actually performed the wonders mentioned. (See next verse.)

Verse 14. *And deceiveth them* is the key to the preceding verse. Paul has the same subject in mind in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9 where he calls it "signs and lying wonders." Bible students know that since the days of the apostles, no man has been able to perform any supernatural acts. The word *mi-*

*racle* means generally anything wonderful or out of the ordinary. *He . . . do . . . in the sight of the beast* means the pope performed the deceptive tricks with the leaders of state looking on and approving. *Make* means to "form or fashion," and *image* means an imitation or repetition. The pope required his people to imitate the characteristics of the first beast in his opposition to the worship of the true God. We should not lose sight of the dependence the pope felt he had upon the support of the secular power. That is why the church of Rome would have church and state united today if it could.

Verse 15. The *image* of the beast is something that is a figure or is like it. The predominating characteristic of Pagan Rome with regard to her treatment of Christianity, was her persecution of the disciples and even to the extent of slaying the true worshipers of God. Therefore any person or group of persons that imitated that character would have the support of Papal Rome, and in that sense would receive *life* therefrom. The closing words of this verse verify the above statement by saying that those who would not worship (pay homage to and show respect) *should be killed*.

Verse 16. *Mark* is from CHARAGMA, which Thayer defines, "a stamp, an imprinted mark," then explains it to mean, "of the mark stamped on the forehead or the right hand as a badge of the follower of Antichrist." Of course the branding which John saw was symbolical of something that would not be seen with natural eyes. The invisible fact concerning those who imitated the beast was their guilt. God could see it and the detectives of the pope had some way of recognizing it.

Verse 17. The pope restricted the privileges and rights of all who would not submit to his dictation. If a man gave evidence of having the mark (the stain of guilt), and who *had* (knew and endorsed) the *number of his name* was given permission to proceed with his own interests.

Verse 18. *The number of the beast* and *the number of a man* are declared to be the same. Also according to the preceding verse these phrases are both equivalent to the *number of his name*. John tells us the number of his name which is 666, but he does not tell us what the name is. Remember the beast now being cited is the first one or

Pagan Rome. Well, the government is not what has this number, for John says it is the number of a man. So we need to find a man who was outstanding at the head of Pagan Rome the letters of whose name will give us the number (numerical values being indicated with letters in those times). In the Greek it is CHXS and Thayer gives us the following comments on the term. "A mystical number the meaning of which is clear when it is written in Hebrew letters . . . i. e., Nero Caesar." The question might arise why this particular one of the Caesars or Roman Emperors was selected for the symbol. The reason is that he was one of the most notorious and infamous of the emperors. He was the one who had Paul slain and his inhuman treatment of Christians set the pattern after which other rulers followed in their opposition to the true church.

#### Revelation 14

Verse 1. The preceding chapter took us back to the first century of the Christian Era and dealt with the years of Pagan Rome, then came on to the time of Papal Rome and predicted the Dark Ages of 1260 years. The present chapter will continue down through that period and through the days of the Reformation, finally reaching the last great day of judgment and the separation of the saved from the unsaved. The Lamb is Christ and Zion is the true church which has been persecuted all through the Dark Ages. In the course of that period there were multitudes of faithful Christians who would not receive the mark of the beast, but instead they had the name of the Father written in their foreheads.

Verse 2. *Voice of many waters* symbolizes that great numbers had resisted the temptations of Rome, and *thunder* is a symbol denoting that the sound of triumph is strong and of great volume. *Voice of harpers* means the organs of song in the bodies of the redeemed, for the next verse says they were singing with the harps.

Verse 3. *A new song*. The saints of God always have the same story to tell and the same song to sing, and that is about redemption through the blood of the Lamb. But that story has a new significance whenever the faithful have another victory over the forces of evil through faith in Christ Jesus, and in that sense it becomes a *new song*. At the present time they had gained a victory over the apostate institution



and hence they had great reason to rejoice and sing. The four *beasts* (living creatures) and the four and twenty elders are among the grateful listeners to the song. The hundred and forty and four thousand are the same ones we read about in chapter 7. *No man could learn that song.* Men of the world can sing any kind of song that is written as far as the literal execution of it is concerned, but they cannot realize what it means to express themselves in song as can those who have been redeemed from sin in the blood of the Lamb, and then again experienced the joy of winning out in a battle against the hosts of wickedness as these had. The corrupt institution of Rome had tried to overcome them by its abominable allurements but had failed.

Verse 4. In figurative language heathenism, paganism or idolatry, likewise any other form of unlawful worship is used to symbolize adultery and other forms of immorality. The persons of this verse were disciples who had remained true to the service of Christ though often tempted to commit spiritual adultery with paganism and other practices of Rome. *Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* covers much more than is often realized. It means to follow Him through sorrow as well as joy; through evil report as well as good, and through the valley of death if the enemy drives that affliction upon the servant of the Lord. Incidentally this verse gives us some information on the subject of virgins. The common idea is that only women can be virgins but these are called such because they had not been defiled with women, and men only could be defiled in that way. True the writer is considering spiritual adultery, but the language would not have been used were it not understood that either sex may be a virgin. *Firstfruits* is figurative in the sense of quality, and the word is based on the requirements of the Mosaic law. The Jews were commanded to give the first of all their flocks and herds and the products of the field unto the Lord. The word finally came to mean the best service that one could render to Him. The disciples of this verse had performed such excellent devotions that the word *firstfruits* is used denoting something especially dear to the Lord.

Verse 5. *Guile* means deceit and these faithful disciples had no desire nor occasion to try deceiving anyone.

That evil trait was one of the prominent ones of the "man of sin." *Fault* means blemish or spot in one's conduct or manner of life. Hence this verse represents persons who are correct in both word and deed. That would indicate that their hearts were right also because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12: 34), and from the heart come "murders, adulteries," etc. (Matthew 15: 19). These saints were free from all these products of an evil heart so we may conclude they were pure in heart. That explains why they were allowed to be *before the throne of God*, for Matthew 5: 8 says the pure in heart shall see God. These brave soldiers of the cross had been strengthened in their fight of faith by the very trials that were intended to destroy them.

Verse 6. *Everlasting gospel* is what had been kept from the people during the Dark Ages. As long as Rome could hold her subjects in ignorance of the Bible she was able to continue the dictatorial rule over them. Even the kings and other rulers over the various nations and countries were held back because they were not permitted to make their own application of the scriptures either for the lives of their subjects or for themselves. They were told that the scriptures were "not of any private interpretation" (making a perverted use of 2 Peter 1: 20), and that they must leave that to the church. Not only were they forbidden to interpret what they might have been able to read, but the Bible was kept in the Latin language so that they could not even read it. But Martin Luther and his associates gave the Book to the people in their native tongue so they could read for themselves. Concerning this great work I shall make a quotation from Edward Gibbon the English historian: "By their hands the lofty fabric of superstition, from the abuse of indulgencies to the intercession of the Virgin, has been levelled with the ground. Myriads of both sexes of the monastic profession [that of the secluded monks] were restored to the liberty and labors of social life. A hierarchy of saints and angels, of imperfect and subordinate deities, were stripped of their temporal powers, and reduced to the enjoyment of celestial happiness; their images and relics were banished from the church; and the credulity [blind readiness to believe] of the people was no longer nourished with the daily repetition of

miracles and visions." — Volume 4, Page 608.

Verse 7. The angel is announcing the glorious work of giving the word of God back to the people, and bidding them rejoice over it and give Him glory for it. *Hour of his judgment* means the time is come when the great apostate institution is to be judged by having her power broken through the work of the reformers. *Worship him that made heaven and earth*, instead of the superstitious objects held before them by Rome.

Verse 8. A result of the *everlasting gospel* which the preceding angel announced is then stated by *another angel*, namely, *Babylon is fallen*. The reader is reminded that the term *Babylon* in this part of the great drama means the institution that was formed by the union of church and state. It is here called *that great city* because its head was the city of Rome where both the emperor and pope resided. *Wine of the wrath of her fornication* is a figurative phrase combining the false teaching and idolatrous practices of Rome. As long as the people were kept in ignorance of the Bible, they could be *made to drink* of this wine. The announcement that *Babylon is fallen* means that the union of church and state was dissolved as a result of the information brought to the people through the Bible, translated in their native language so they could read it for themselves, and form conclusions independent of Rome.

Verse 9. A third angel appeared to give a warning for all who might still persist in following after the evil pattern set by Rome. He mentions the three phases of the subject that were treated at chapter 13: 14-17. Concerning the *image* I shall make another quotation from Edward Gibbon which follows that which is quoted at verse 6. "The imitation of Paganism was supplied [replaced] by a pure and spiritual worship of prayer and thanksgiving, the most worthy of man, the least unworthy of the Deity."

Verse 10. The false worshippers are told that if they persist in drinking of this wine of the wrath of Rome, they will be punished by having to drink of another supply of wine; that will be the *wine of the wrath of God*. Wine has been used figuratively for centuries to symbolize wrath and anger and other intense conditions of the intellect. (See Psalms 60: 3; Proverbs 4: 17; Jeremiah 25: 15; 51: 7.) *Without*

*mixture* means it will not be diluted nor weakened, but they shall get the full effect of the wrath of God upon those who have been devoted to Rome. *Shall be tormented with fire and brimstone* refers to the lake of fire into which the wicked will be cast at the day of judgment. *In the presence . . . of the Lamb*. This denotes that the sentence of this punishment will be pronounced in the presence of Christ and his angels. (See Matthew 25: 31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-9.) The sentence will be pronounced then but it will be served according to the next verse.

Verse 11. *Smoke of their torment* refers to that which will arise from the fire in the lake into which the wicked will have been cast. *Ascendeth up for ever and ever*. If the smoke is to ascend for ever it follows that the torment will continue for ever. It will come from the lake of fire which has been created for the purpose of tormenting the unsaved. The particular unsaved persons named in this place are those who have guilty relations with the beast, the image or the mark (chapter 13: 14, 15). But all the unsaved will be in this place for Matthew 25: 41 says they will be told: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." *No rest day nor night* is another way of saying that the punishment of the unsaved will be endless. Terrible thought!!

Verse 12. This has the same meaning as chapter 13: 10.

Verse 13. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*. That can be said of every person who is faithful until death, but it is said here especially with reference to those who have died under persecution. It is peculiarly appropriate to make the statement in view of the thousands who had been slain by Pagan and Papal Rome through the past centuries. Also after the Reformation had stirred up the anger of the "die-hards" of Babylon many others were put to death in their struggles. *From henceforth*. Some commentators say this means from the judgment day and thereafter. It is true that all righteous people will be blessed (happy) after that day, but I do not believe the Spirit was applying the blessing to that date in this verse. There will be saints living when Christ comes who will never die, yet they will be happy for ever. But our verse is about those who *die in the Lord*, and they

are especially mentioned for the reason described in the first part of this paragraph. And since these who died in the Lord had the experience some time before the end of the world, the passage gives us the grand information that when a righteous person dies he is happy from that moment onward. This all agrees with Paul's remarks in Philippians 1: 21-23. *Their works do follow them.* The Greek for *follow* means both to accompany a person and to come along afterwards. Both senses of the word apply to a faithful servant of God. The good deeds he performs will still linger behind to be an influence for others. ("By it he being dead yet speaketh," Hebrews 11: 4.) Also the record of faithfulness will be with him in principle to recommend him before God.

Verse 14. The rest of the chapter is a vision of the day of judgment. Clouds are often used as symbols of glory and power especially white clouds. The person sitting on the cloud is like the Son of man because he is but a symbol. Yet we must think of Christ, who is being symbolized by the vision. *Golden crown* signifies a king and we are told in 1 Corinthians 15: 25 that He is to reign until the end. *Sharp sickle* is an instrument for gathering the fruits of a harvest. Jesus is king in his own right, but he is generally represented as accomplishing the work of His kingdom in cooperation with the angels. Especially is this true of the work to be performed at his second coming. (See Matthew 25: 31; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16; 2 Thessalonians 1: 7.)

Verse 15. *Another* angel is said because angels have been named previously in this chapter, and because those heavenly beings are so often employed to act as attendants upon the Lord or sometimes upon other angels as will be done yet in this chapter. There are to be two kinds of crops gathered on the day of judgment as generally happens after any growing season. One kind is the good and the other is the bad, and they are always separated one from the other and different dispositions made of them. In the present case the good is represented in the ordinary phraseology of a good harvest which implies sheaves of grain. The bad is represented by grapes which we have just seen above symbolize the wrath of God upon the wicked. The attending angel signalled to Him who was on the cloud to use his sickle to gather the ripe harvest.

Verse 16. The One on the white cloud did as requested and gathered the grain. The reader will understand this represents the good among mankind.

Verse 17. The other sickle was in the hands of an angel instead of Him who was on the cloud. This also agrees with the language of Christ in Matthew 13: 39 where he says "the angels are the reapers." Notice these angels are said to come *out of the temple*. That is because it is in heaven from where the authority of God is issued.

Verse 18. The next attending angel came out from the *altar*. That article was also at the temple and it was the piece that was used for burning certain victims. The symbol is very appropriate since this sickle is to be used for gathering the grapes; grapes for the wrath of God. This angel gave the signal to the one holding the second sickle to use it for gathering in the clusters. The reason assigned by him for the order was *her grapes are fully ripe*. God is never premature in his operations. He explained to Abraham in Genesis 15: 16 that the reason for waiting until the fourth generation for attacking the land of promise was that "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." In 2 Peter 3: 15 it says that the longsuffering of God in delaying the destruction of the earth "is salvation." Whenever God in his infinite wisdom sees that the time is *fully ripe* for the harvest He will send forth the reapers and bring an end to the earth and its contents.

Verse 19. As a literal fact a wine-press is a large vat in which grapes are placed for extraction of the juice. In Bible times mechanical means had not been invented for pressure, and the result was accomplished by man power. A lattice-like platform was laid on top of the grapes and a number of men walked round and round over it until the juice was forced out, being received below through a trough running from the vat to a receiving vessel. The symbolic feature is in the fact that the desired result was accomplished by a treading under foot. The operation is used to symbolize the act of the Lord in trampling under his feet the wicked people of the earth. The flowing of the wine signifies the flowing of the wrath of God against men's unrighteousness.

Verse 20. The symbol continues with the same significance but with some added specifications. Being done *with-*

*out the city* denotes that the punishment of the wicked will be outside the holy city in the eternal world. In computing the amount of blood (of the grape) that came out we must not forget that the whole performance is symbolic, and the volume is given in order to furnish us some idea of the terrible fate of those whose unrighteous lives have brought upon them the wrath of God. To be conservative I suppose *unto the horse bridles* would be about four feet. The amount was enough to flood the ground for a distance of a thousand and six hundred furlongs or two hundred miles. Nothing is said about any kind of retainer on the sides, hence to be wide enough to flow freely that far and that deep (if only in the center) would require a considerable width. It all should give us a profound impression of the fate of those who die out of Christ.

### Revelation 15

Verse 1. The preceding chapter describes the vision before John that came down to the day of judgment and to the final assignment of all mankind to their eternal destinations. The present chapter goes back some distance (as the book has done before), and will again take up the judgments of God that were poured out upon the apostate church for her worship of idols and her persecution of the faithful servants of God. *Seven* angels are seen as a symbol of the completeness of God's system for executing his wrath upon the wicked of the earth.

Verse 2. Clear glass and fire are symbols of opposite facts and yet are appropriately used. The verse tells of several persons who had won a victory of a spiritual nature over the forces of Rome. The fire symbolizes their conflicts in which they were victorious, and the clear glass signifies their calmness of mind after the victory. The beast, the image and the mark were all involved in the conflict. The faithful servants resisted the direct attacks of Rome, also avoided imitating her in their lives, and as a consequence had escaped receiving the mark of guilt. *Over the number of his name.* The man whose number is stated in the text is Nero Caesar. Getting the victory over the number of his name is an indirect way of saying their victory was over Nero. That is significant since he was the emperor who was chief among the heads of Rome that tried to force the Christians to sin.

Verse 3. The song of Moses and of the Lamb was especially appropriate. It is to be associated with the four and twenty elders who have been mentioned a number of times. Twelve of them represent the Mosaic system and twelve stand for that under Christ. The song John heard these happy persons singing was about the lawgivers of those great institutions. But while the subject matter of the song was concerning them as the lawgivers, they ascribed the credit to works of God because they are marvelous, and to Christ as a King who is true and just in his ways.

Verse 4. The occasion for this great rejoicing is the prospect of judgments that are soon to be inflicted upon the powers of Rome whose hold upon the people has just been broken by the effects of the Reformation. That is why they exclaim about the worthiness of the Lord to be glorified. *All nations shall come and worship before thee.* Their worship will consist in doing homage to God as the true object of praise, for the light of truth that the Bible shed on them since it was given back to them. Through that channel of information they have been informed that God's judgments are just.

Verse 5. This verse has the same significance as chapter 11: 19.

Verse 6. Much of what is said and is to happen in many of the chapters to come has been considered before. It will pertain to God's judgments against the corruptions of Rome and for her mistreatment of the faithful servants of Christ. Seven angels were clothed in white linen which means purity and the golden girdles signify the splendor of the place.

Verse 7. It is important to keep constantly in mind that we are studying in a book of symbols or signs. Many of the things John saw in the vision have reference to the severe denunciations that were made in the days of the Reformation. Those statements were sounded into the ears of kings and other leaders of the apostate church. A *vial* is used in the symbolic picture because it is a vessel out of which something can be poured, and the judgments of God are said to be *poured* out. That would indicate a large and continuous stream of His judgments. One of the *beasts* (living creatures) gave the vials to the angels; that was appropriate. The beasts were the saved in the Lord who had been the victims of the rage of the beast of Rome. They

had won a victory through faith, and it was fitting that they should have the honor of handing the vials to the angels.

Verse 8. *Temple was filled with smoke.* This was not the smoke of incense as is sometimes mentioned, for that occurs only when righteous servants are performing worship, and that is not what is going on now. It is the smoke of God's wrath against the corruptions of the beast. Those guilty of the corruptions are under judgment and God is about to execute wrath upon them. It is too late for them to expect mercy from God, hence no one will be permitted to enter the temple to plead for it.

### Revelation 16

Verse 1. The great voice was out of the temple. That means it was from God, for we have learned in the preceding chapter that no man was able to be in the temple at this time. The seven angels have been given the vials of divine wrath, now the voice bids them empty their contents in the places deserving such treatment.

Verse 2. *Noisome and grievous* indicates something extremely objectionable and damaging. It should be remarked that the judgments against the wicked leaders in the corrupt institution were suffered immediately. They felt it through the humiliation of seeing their places of evil rulership brought down through the effects of the Reformation. But this was destined to be only a foretaste of the final judgment that will be pronounced upon them at the last day. The *mark* and *image* of the beast have been explained at chapter 13: 14.

Verse 3. *Blood of a dead man.* When a man dies his blood dies with him and becomes poisonous. That which would come in contact with it would be killed. The blood of Christ was dead when it was poured out, hence it will kill the sins of the world if brought into contact with them. (See 1 John 1: 7.)

Verse 4. The mention of the earth and other parts of the creation are to represent them as symbols, denoting the completeness of God's judgments against evil men. That is why rivers and water fountains are named in this verse.

Verse 5. *Angel of the waters* is the one in the preceding verse. These angels form a unit (seven) and hence

any principle held by one goes for all of them. The angel commended the action of the Lord for the righteous judgments inflicted upon the servants of the beast. *Art, and wast and shalt be* is the same as saying that God had no beginning and will have no end. Such a Being cannot do wrong hence his judgments against His enemies are bound to be just.

Verse 6. The first part of this verse is literal, for the agencies of both Pagan and Papal Rome caused many righteous servants of God to shed their blood. *Given them blood to drink* is figurative and refers to the legal executions imposed on the wicked.

Verse 7. This angel repeated the same commendation of God's judgments that was expressed by the one in verses 5 and 6.

Verse 8. The sun is a part of the creation which was commented upon at verse 4. It is specified in the present group of symbols because of the particular item it contributes to the welfare of humanity when it is used normally. It is the source of light and heat without which man could not live. But it is now used as a symbol of torment of fire by increasing the volume of the rays upon men. In Malachi 2: 2 the Lord was making threats against some of His ancient people for their wickedness in which he says "I will curse your blessing." The thought is similar to the one of our verse. The sun is normally a blessing to the people of the earth, but it is used as a symbol of cursing.

Verse 9. The intense heat caused men to blaspheme the name of God because of their suffering; that was because they recognized Him as being the cause of the affliction. But the very motive that caused them to blaspheme Him, should have had the effect of making them repent, for they must have known that a Being who can bring such tremendous revolutions in the universe is worthy to be feared and served.

Verse 10. *The seat of the beast* means his throne or headquarters. The *darkness* is figurative and refers to some confusion or disarrangement of the affairs of the government. To gnaw the tongues for pain would be a natural or literal performance, but it is another one of the many symbols used in this book, and represents the intense disappointment and humiliation of the leaders in Rome when they

see their structure of oppressive power tumbling about them.

Verse 11. This is similar to verse 9 and shows the effect that pride can have upon men. *Repented not* can be accounted for only by thinking of their stubbornness which is a form or manifestation of pride.

Verse 12. The great river Euphrates has played an important part in God's dealing with his people in their relation with the nations. The city of Babylon was situated upon its banks. When the time came for the overthrow of the first of the "four world empires" (the Babylonian), it was accomplished by diverting the stream from its regular channel. When that was done the water was lowered (was *dried up*) so that the soldiers of Cyrus (*kings of the east*) could march into the city and slay the man on the throne. All of this describes a literal event in history, but it is used to form the phraseology for the overthrow of another Babylon ("Mystery Babylon the Great"), which had been brought into existence by the union of church and state.

Verse 13. Frogs are slimy, loathsome creatures and are used to represent three very loathsome powers and individuals. They are the *dragon* (Satan, chapter 12: 9), the *beast* (Rome) and the *false prophet*. The last phrase is singular in grammatical form but does not refer to any particular one of the false prophets. It means the group of evil workers who used their deceptive tactics to mislead the people all over the domain or the dominions of Rome.

Verse 14. *Devils* means the demons by which the apostate church imposed upon the victims of their treachery. *Working miracles* is explained at chapter 13: 14, and it is the same that Paul predicts in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9 as follows: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." *Gather them to the battle* means the battle will continue until the great day.

Verse 15. This verse is in the nature of a parenthesis because it speaks of the coming of Christ, at which time all things on the earth will end. But the preceding verse mentions a battle that is to continue until that event, and the verse following our present one will go back to the beginning of that battle as to its coverage of time.

Verse 16. *Armageddon* is the Greek word of the original text spelled with

English letters. The literal meaning of the word as defined in Thayer's lexicon is "destruction." It is the action referred to by "battle" in verse 14 which means war in general, not merely a single fight. This will be commented upon at length at chapter 20.

Verse 17. The *seventh angel* was the last of the group that was to pour the vials out upon the earth. The voice came out of the temple which signifies that it was a voice of authority. The voice made the brief announcement that *it is done*, meaning that the revolution signified by the "seven last plagues" was accomplished. The great revolution thus symbolized was the Reformation of Luther and his fellow workers that resulted in breaking up the union of church and state.

Verse 18. *Thunder, lightnings and earthquake* in symbolic language refers to great commotions in the public affairs. Such a mighty movement as the dissolving of church and state was enough to bring forth these demonstrations about the temple, for it meant so much to the interests of the cause of God who occupies the temple.

Verse 19. The *great city* means the institution composed of the union of church and state, as it is used here and some other places, not merely church or state singly. It is in that sense that the name Babylon is used in this verse, because the literal city of Babylon had been destroyed centuries before (Isaiah 13: 19-22), and the apostate church of Rome as a religious institution is not to be destroyed until Jesus comes again (2 Thessalonians 2: 8). But Babylon as the union of church and state was dissolved by the Reformation never to be restored. *Divided into three parts*. This partial destruction has been indicated a number of times and has been explained to mean that God does not completely extinguish every institution He condemns. *Came in remembrance before God* means he remembered the evils that city had done to His people. *Give unto her the cup*, etc., is the same figurative sense of wine that has been commented upon in chapter 14: 19, 20.

Verse 20. *Island* in symbolic language means inhabited spots and *mountains* denotes units of government. John saw these *flee away* in the vision which was symbolical, and the meaning is on the same subject that has been under consideration through many of the passages, namely, the downfall of the political power of Rome.



Verse 21. Weight of *talents* varied according to the different standards and they were at least fifty pounds on an average. To drop a hail stone of that weight as a symbol of God's wrath would give some impression of the greatness of that wrath. *Blasphemed God* means they spoke very evil words against Him, because of their disappointment and humiliation over the loss of their political power.

### Revelation 17

Verse 1. This chapter (like some others) goes back to the time just before the Reformation, and will make symbolic predictions of that revolution. It should be stated that while the institution of church and state (which has not yet been dissolved as to the start of this chapter), is regarded as Babylon the Great and an enemy of God, the church part of the combination will seem to receive the more attention from the Lord in his condemnations. That is because it deals with the affairs of the soul which are more important than those of the secular government. Yet because the apostate church was supported by the political power of Rome and her Empire, much of the language in the symbols will be based upon the geographical and political features of that city. *Show unto thee the judgment* or give John a prediction of God's judgments in a vision. The *great whore* is said of the apostate church because false religions of all kinds are likened to immorality in figurative language. *Sitteth upon many waters*. Waters in symbolic language means people upon whom the corrupt institution pressed down with her desolating weight of intolerance and persecution.

Verse 2. The *kings of the earth* means the rulers over the various divisions of the political empire, such as the ones named at chapter 13: 1. In their devotion to the spiritual harlot they were guilty of fornication. The *inhabitants of the earth* refers to the subjects under these kings who submitted to their adulterous ruling. *Wine of her fornication*. In literal practice we find "wine and women" often associated, hence they are so considered in the symbolic vision that John saw.

Verse 3. *Carried me away in the spirit* is significant, and reminds us again of the truth that John never did leave the isle of Patmos literally while in the vision of this book. It was a part of the symbolical vision to be

taken away into the wilderness and see the things that shall be described. The *woman* is the apostate church of Rome symbolized by the city of Rome because the church rested on the government of that city for support. The literal reason for using a beast in the symbol that was scarlet, was the fact that scarlet was one of the royal colors of the Empire. *Seven heads and ten horns* is explained at chapter 13: 1, and it will appear in this chapter with a slight variation in the application.

Verse 4. Since the state color of the beast (Rome) was scarlet and purple, it was appropriate that the rider of the beast should be robed to match. It is literally true that the clergy of the church of Rome wear these colors in their church ceremonies. It is also appropriate that such colors be used in the symbols of that church, in view of the faithful people of God who had their blood taken from them in the persecution at the hands of that wicked institution. Being decked with precious stones and pearls also was appropriate because the church of Rome possesses and uses great wealth in her ceremonies. The symbolic cup represents the corrupt practices that the church of Rome forced upon her subjects. It is symbolized in the form of a person filling a cup with vile and abominable materials then forcing some helpless person to drink it.

Verse 5. The name that John saw written on the forehead of this woman was put there by the Lord to designate to the apostate her true character, not that she had taken to herself such an inscription. In truth the leaders of the church of Rome of today deny that this applies to their "holy mother church." *Mystery* is a part of her characteristics; Thayer's definition of the word at this place is, "The mystic or hidden sense." The apostate church has always thrived most when she could keep her people in ignorance of what was going on. *Babylon the great*. There are many ways in which anything can be great both good and bad. Babylon was great in a bad sense and that is because she was the most extensive and powerful influence for evil that Satan ever devised. *Mother of harlots*. A bad woman can be the mother of pure daughters and they would not need to participate in the wickedness of their mother; but this woman's daughters also are harlots. Of course as we have previously learned, harlotry in figurative lan-

guage means any false religion or unscriptural organization. The conclusion is that the religious denominations in the world are the harlot daughters of Rome, because they obtained the principal tenets that make up their creeds from the doctrines put out by that apostate church. *Abominations of the earth* is a general summing up of the evil doctrines and practices of the church of Rome throughout the world.

Verse 6. *Saints* and *martyrs* refer to the same people although the words have a different (but not conflicting) meaning. *Saint* means a holy or righteous person which applies to all Christians. *Martyr* means witness and all Christians are martyrs because they are faithful to the testimony of the Gospel regardless of what may be the result. The fact that both *saints* and *martyrs* had shed their blood in defence of the testimony of Jesus, shows the latter word is not applied to some on the simple ground that they died for Christ. *Saw the woman drunken*. To be drunk literally requires that a person be under the influence of alcohol. The term has come to be used figuratively, as when it is said that a man is "drunk with a craze for money; or for pleasure." Rome had shed so much blood of righteous people she is said to be drunk with the desire to slay the Christians. *Wondered with great admiration*. The last word usually has the sense of approval, but it is not restricted to that meaning. The phrase means the vision John saw was so unusual and vast that he could only gaze at it.

Verse 7. *Wherefore didst thou marvel?* This question indicates that the amazed expression on the face of John was mixed with that of being puzzled over the whole phenomenon. The angel promises to explain to him all about the mystery involving the *woman*, the *beast* and the *seven heads* and *ten horns* that the beast had. The passage deviates from the usual manner of the book. When the symbols are described we are generally left to figure out (by the help of history) what the interpretation is. This time the angel will tell to what institutions and persons the symbols refer. Not that he will specify the personal items of application, but he will describe it so that a student of the Bible and history should have no uncertainty about it.

Verse 8, *Was and is not* refers to

Pagan Rome which ceased to be such an institution (on the surface) after the time of Constantine. *Ascend out of the bottomless pit*. The last two words mean that part of the intermediate state where evil men and angels are kept until the judgment day. It is the place where the wicked rich man went as recorded in Luke 16: 23 where the word is "hell" but comes from a different Greek term. Since the members of Pagan Rome were wicked it was necessary to show them as ascending from this pit. But we should take notice that the vision leaps across all the intervening years for the moment to predict the final destiny of those members of the beast that had been in the bottomless pit. After the intermediate state is no longer needed, these wicked persons will ascend out of that pit and *go into perdition*, which means they will be cast into the lake of fire. Having shown a brief picture of the fate of this beast, the vision at once resumes the events and appearances that are to take place before the final day of *perdition*. The vision is so unusual that the uninformed shall *wonder* at it. That is the same word used in verse 6 which was seen to mean that one is puzzled with amazement, and it would have that meaning especially with the uninformed. By that word I mean the ones described by John as those *whose names are not written in the book of life*. Chapter 13: 8 shows this italicized statement means those who are not faithful servants of Christ. Their names (of the faithful) are said to have been written in the book *from the foundation of the world* or before the human family had become an orderly group of human beings. The beast that *was* and *is not* and *yet is* was that which caused the astonishment spoken of above. The beast *was* Pagan Rome outwardly until the time of Constantine, who caused the union of church and state to take place. That put an end to Pagan Rome as far as outward profession was concerned, and it is in that sense that John says the beast *is not*. But in reality Papal Rome retained so much of the doctrines and wicked practices of the original empire, that it could truly be said of Papal Rome that it was Pagan Rome in disguise or in another form. It is in that sense that John says the institution *yet is*, which caused the uninformed of the world to be amazed and puzzled. But the righteous did not have to be in such a state of mind be-

cause they had always been respectful hearers of what inspired men had said. For instance, if they had only read and considered what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2, they would have expected such revolutions to take place as these affairs of Rome.

Verse 9. The *seven mountains* have no special significance except as an item of geography and history by which to identify the city of Rome. *On which the woman sitteth* means that the apostate church rested upon the government of Rome for support.

Verse 10. In some previous verses and in verse 12 below the text plainly says the ten horns represent ten kings or kingdoms that were inferior units of the Roman Empire. Hence the *seven kings* of this verse must have another meaning, and I believe they refer to important men who were leaders in the affairs of state right in the capital city. It is merely a coincidence that the Lord had seven of those prominent men in mind which is also the number of the geographical hills or "mountains" that comprised the city of Rome. It is clearly shown in Roman history that leading men in the Empire often vied with each other for power and the vision shows such a conflict.

Verse 11. The beast that *was* has been already shown to be Pagan Rome. The apostle says this beast is the eighth; not merely one more beast that would count up to eight, but it was the eighth and of the seven. This denotes that it was in the same line, or bore some fact in common with the others. And the phrase *goeth into perdition* strengthens that conclusion, for we learned in verse 8 that it was Pagan Rome that was to go into perdition. (Not that Papal Rome will escape perdition, but that is not under consideration at present.) The vision means that Pagan Rome as a whole must take her place in the count with all those individual "kings" or chief men in the corrupt institution, and all go down as a unit into the lake of perdition.

Verse 12. These *ten kings* (or small kingdoms) are named at chapter 13: 1. It says they had received no kingdom *as yet*. The meaning is they were not in rightful control of their kingdoms although they were acting as kings. But the phrase also indicates that they will finally be kings in their own right after Papal Rome has been put down even as Pagan Rome was, then each

nation will have its own chosen form of government. But for the time being they may only act *as kings*. *One hour with the beast* is a figure of speech meaning that the time for continued oppression of Rome was to be comparatively short. The reader should bear in mind that the vision goes from the days of Pagan Rome in verse 11 to those of Papal Rome in the present verse. On that basis the beast now is Papal Rome in conjunction with the state.

Verse 13. *These* means the ten kings of the preceding verse and until they have had their eyes opened by receiving the Bible back again, they will not know any better than to give their power and strength unto the beast (church and state).

Verse 14. *These* again means the ten kings just mentioned. While they were still under the control of Papal Rome and blinded by the false doctrines of that corrupt beast, they were opposed to the Lamb of God and made (religious) war with Him. *The Lamb shall overcome them*. This will be accomplished by the Reformation, for that movement will give the Bible back to the people in their native tongue. When that is done the Lamb shall *overcome them* which means He will subdue their opposition to the word of God and to the true church that is regulated by that word. *Lord of lords* puts Christ above all other rulers, and *King of kings* means He is greater than the ten kings who fought against Him. Christ does not conduct the conflict directly but does it by His great army. The army is composed of those who are *called* (by the Gospel), and they are *chosen* because they have qualified themselves by being *faithful*.

Verse 15. The angel now begins to give John the interpretation of the vision as was mentioned at verse 7. The first verse says the corrupt woman sits upon many waters, and this verse explains it to mean peoples and nations, etc. That is because the Roman Empire was one of the "four world empires" which contained all the so-called civilized people of the earth.

Verse 16. The ten horns are the kings or kingdoms which are named in the comments at chapter 13: 1. *Shall hate the whore* is literal, for when the kings and people of the smaller units of the Empire come to realize how deeply they have been deceived by her they can have no other

feeling toward her. The rest of the verse is a symbolical vision of the resistance that will be put up by these ten kings and their people when they "get their eyes open."

Verse 17. *God hath put in their hearts.* God never directly causes any person to do wrong who wants to do right. But when a man or group of men shows a persistence toward wrong, then He gives them up to carry out their own ways until they have learned their lesson. (See the comments at 2 Thessalonians 2: 11.) It had been predicted (in such passages as that just cited) that such conduct would be practiced by these kings, hence in doing so they were carrying out the divine prediction. But they will be suffered to operate in that way only until the words of God shall be fulfilled. This means until the time for them to be enlightend by the work of the Reformation.

Verse 18. Since the Reformation has not occurred yet, at the point of the great drama applying to this verse, the *woman* and *great city* refers to Babylon as the union of church and state.

### Revelation 18

Verse 1. The angel had great *power* which is from *EXOUSIA*, the leading meaning of which is "authority." The possession of that qualification is explained by the fact that he *came down from heaven* which is the seat of all authority. It is understandable also why his glory would light up the earth, for everything that pertains to that celestial region is glorious.

Verse 2. The preceding chapter pictures conditions just prior to the revolution of the Reformation. The present chapter will extend the vision on through that period, showing the effects it will have among the nations of the world, and will predict the permanent end of the union of church and state. We should keep clearly in mind the truth that we are studying a book of symbols, and therefore we will not try to make a literal application of the symbols. However, even political and religious advantages may sometimes bring material gains to men of selfish character, hence we should not be surprised to see indications of that in some instances. The angel cried with a *strong voice*, which signified that his announcement was of interest to many. *Babylon* here means the institution formed by the union

of church and state. That body had been in control since the time of Constantine, but now it is destined to be dissolved by the work of the Reformation. *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*; the repetition is for emphasis. The *fall* refers to the dissolving of church and state through the influence of the Bible that had been given to the people by Luther and his fellow workers. *Is become the habitation*, etc. This is symbolic and the language is formed from what literally happened to the ancient city of Babylon after it was destroyed by its conqueror. The description of that destruction from which our verse gets its symbols may be seen in Isaiah 13: 19-22 and Jeremiah 50: 35-40.

Verse 3. *Wine of the wrath of her fornication.* This combines several symbolical thoughts. Wine suggests drunkenness and that is used figuratively sometimes to mean being beside oneself through the influence of false doctrine, which certainly was an outstanding characteristic of Rome. It also stands for the wrath of God upon evildoers, and fornication refers to intimacy with unlawful organizations. Kings and merchants all reaped personal advantages from their subjects and customers, because they were duped into thinking they should submit to the wishes of their superiors.

Verse 4. *Come out of her my people.* Even after the work of the reformers was well under way, and the institution of Babylon as a body had fallen, there were still some individuals connected with the church part of the former institution who were honest and at heart were desirous of serving God. They are the ones who are called *my people* because the Lord considered them true to the testimony of Christ as far as they had been permitted to learn it. Now if they will heed the call to *come out* and line up with the workers of the Reformation they will be received by Him. If they refuse to heed this call they will have to *receive of her plagues*.

Verse 5. *Sins have reached unto heaven* means the corruptions of Rome were an offense to heaven, and also had become notoriously public so that God *remembered* (took unfavorable notice of) her iniquities.

Verse 6. The pronoun *you* refers to "my people" in the preceding verse. Human beings cannot bring judgment upon a universal body of corruption by mere human strength. But if they

will *come out* and then use their influence to expose the harlot (which many people did as shown in various histories of the Reformation), they will bring about a chastisement of her that is figuratively described as making her drink a double measure of her own wine.

Verse 7. The leaders in Rome or Babylon had been living a selfish life at the expense of their helpless dupes. Now that they have been undeceived by the workers in the Reformation, they are urged to make their condemnation all the more severe upon her. A *queen* would be in good circumstances in that she would have one on whom to depend for support and would have no sorrow or anxiety.

Verse 8. *One day* cannot be restricted to a period of 24 hours, but the things predicted of her will come on the same day or by the same cause. That will be the effects of opening the eyes of the nations that have been oppressed by her. The *mourning* will be literal and it will be over the loss of her former power. *Utterly burned with fire* denotes that the fire of God's jealousy will bring utter (complete) destruction to the combination of church and state—not to each separately, but the combination will be dissolved for ever.

Verse 9. *Kings of the earth* had been protected in their defrauding of the uninformed people. *Committed fornication*. Rome has been called a harlot hence those who have been intimate with her are guilty of fornication. It is natural for them to lament seeing her burning (under the fiery judgments of God.)

Verse 10. The symbols are changed from a woman to a city. But it means the same thing for the mother of harlots had her seat where she carried on her adulterous practices in the city of Babylon. Of course to see her "red light district" going up in smoke means the end of her trade. *One hour* is used here to mean the same period as *one day* in verse 8.

Verse 11. *The merchants* were the prominent leaders in Rome who had been reaping much gain (both political and material) by imposing their false doctrines on them. There will now be no demand for such "wares" for the customers will have learned that they had been defrauded.

Verse 12, 13. All of the articles named in this paragraph are literal

products, and doubtless the leaders in the corrupt institution dealt in such property for their own selfish enjoyment, but the literal articles are used as symbols of the selfish enjoyments they had by being able to extract the services of the dupes under them.

Verse 14. This virtually continues the same prediction that is made in the preceding verses, but I will call attention to the words about these gains that *thou shalt find them no more at all*. That means the advantages once enjoyed by Babylon (church and state) were never again to be enjoyed by her as before because she will never exist again to enjoy them.

Verse 15. This is virtually the same lament that is described in verse 9, 10, because of their loss of unlawful privileges at the expense of the people. *For the fear of her torment* denotes that the sight of such a burning will give them a feeling of horror. Lest the reader gets lost in all this array of figurative judgments, I shall again state that it is a symbolical picture of the political and religious revolution that came upon the old wicked institution of Rome, after the work of the Reformation broke up the great conspiracy.

Verse 16. The items mentioned are used symbolically, but there is some special appropriateness in the materials named. The formalities of the old Pagan Roman ceremonies were copied by the clergy of Papal Rome. Linen was used for the official robes in the services, and purple and scarlet were the royal colors. The garments were decked literally with gold and precious stones. The city is said to have all these decorations because the scarlet woman was located in the city for her corrupt practices.

Verse 17. *One hour* calls for the same comments that are offered at verse 10. The chapter as a whole is a vision in symbolic form, yet the institution of Babylon or Rome was so widespread, that it was logical to include many of the activities of the members of it. Hence the people interested in the traffic of the sea are brought into the picture, among those whose selfish practices were to be cut off by the downfall of the city.

Verse 18. *What city is like* means a general statement of her greatness as of the past, for now she is very low and worthless since she is being destroyed by fire.

Verse 19. There is not much change in the significance of the symbols of

this verse. Casting dust on their heads was an ancient custom to give expression to feelings of mourning and dismay (Joshua 7: 6; Job 2: 12; Lamentation 2: 10). *One hour* is the same figurative phrase that is in verse 10. *Made desolate* means that Babylon the Great as the union of church and state was to be deserted and cease to be.

Verse 20. The speaker is still the *voice from heaven* (verse 4) which is bidding the apostles and prophets to rejoice over the downfall of Babylon (union of church and state). It was especially appropriate to congratulate these great servants of God, because they had been foremost in defending the lawful church of the Lord against the encroachments of the apostate church. Now that the conspiracy formed by the union of church and state was thrust down, they had great and just reason to rejoice.

Verse 21. *Mighty angel* is said to indicate the size or weight of the stone that was to be handled. The stone was *like* great millstones which were heavy, and their weight was such that if they were thrown into the water they would most assuredly sink; nor would such an object float back up to the surface. That is doubtless why Jesus used it in his comparison of the irreparable fate of certain sinners (Matthew 18: 6). After this mighty angel had cast the stone into the sea he made his explanation of the symbol; it represented the casting down of Babylon. We know it does not mean literal Babylon for that city had not been in existence for centuries (Isaiah 13: 19-22). We know also it does not apply to the religious part of the corrupt institution (though it also was known as Babylon), for that apostate church is not to be destroyed until Jesus comes (2 Thessalonians 2: 8). Hence this can apply only to the Babylon that was composed of church and state. When the stone that represented it was cast into the sea, the angel said that it *shall be found no more at all*. From the foregoing evidences we are given the divine assurance that there will never be another world-wide union of church and state.

Verse 22, 23. The enterprises and activities of human interest that are mentioned in these verses have all been considered in this chapter and understood to have a symbolical meaning. In this paragraph they may be used in both symbolical and literal senses. In either sense the announce-

ment is made that they will never be done again. However, this is not true until we apply it in the light of a proviso that is stated as follows. The phrase *in thee* is used five times in these two verses, and that is the key to the subject. There is not an interest mentioned that will not continue to be practiced as long as the world stands. But they will not be done "in thee" (Babylon as the union of church and state), for that institution will have gone down never to rise again.

Verse 24. This short verse is merely a summing up of the crimes that have been committed by Babylon, on account of which she was doomed to complete overthrow.

### Revelation 19

Verse 1. For several verses the vision will show the heavenly hosts rejoicing together over the victory that has been won over Babylon by the work of the Reformation. *Alleluia* means "praise ye the Lord," and the exclamation is made in view of His great works. *Salvation* is to be ascribed to the Lord because no other has the power to save, and for that reason we should give all *honor* to Him and acknowledge that all power belongs to Him.

Verse 2. The *great voice* is still speaking and acknowledging the righteousness of God's judgments. Those acknowledgements are general and now they will become specific. *Judged the great whore* refers to the overthrow of Babylon which was accomplished by the Reformation. *Hath avenged the blood of his servants*. This fulfilled the promise made to the souls under the altar (chapter 6: 11).

Verse 3. *Her smoke arose up for ever and ever*. "Where there is smoke there is fire." If the smoke ascends for ever the fire will be of the same continuance. Of course this is first applied figuratively to Babylon, meaning her downfall is to be permanent. It is next applied to the individuals who were leaders and supporters of the corrupt beast, who are destined to go into perdition where the fire is endless.

Verse 4. The four beasts (living creatures) felt happy over the victory of Christ because it was through His blood that they had been redeemed from sin. And the four and twenty elders had the same motive for praising God, because they represented the



two organized systems of salvation that had produced the four living creatures.

Verse 5. The voice thus far in these verses seems to have come from the people in general who respect the Lord. Now the voice comes *out of the throne* as if to acknowledge the congratulations just offered to God, and endorsing the idea that all servants of whatever degree or rank should praise Him.

Verse 6. So many people of the civilized world had suffered under the oppression of Rome through the Dark Ages, that it explains why the *voice of a great multitude* was heard praising God. *Voice of many waters* is the same except it is in symbolic form, waters in figurative language being used to represent human voices in action. *Omnipotent* means almighty; God can do anything that is right. The difficulty of conquering the giant influence of the beast in Rome was regarded so great, that it brought to their attention the might of God and called forth these words of praise, and caused the declaration that *He reigneth*.

Verse 7. *Marriage of the Lamb is come*. The subject of marriage is spoken of in the Bible from two different angles, and unless this is understood we may think there are some contradictions. For instance, Christians are said to be married to Christ at the present time (Romans 7: 4), and now our verse says the marriage is about to take place. In old times an engagement was regarded in the light of marriage as far as the moral obligation is concerned. That is why Genesis 19: 14 speaks of the men who had "married his [Lot's] daughters" when they were engaged to them. And in Matthew 1: 18 it says that Mary was espoused to Joseph, while the next verse calls him her husband. So Christians are actually only espoused (engaged) to Christ now. That is why Paul says "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11: 2). But the actual marriage is what is meant in our verse. *His wife hath made herself ready*. This remark is based on the common practice that causes a woman to prepare her garments for the important occasion.

Verse 8. This verse names the kind of raiment that is to be worn by the bride, namely, clean and white linen.

Since that is figurative the apostle explains that it means *righteousness*, so the making of herself ready mentioned in the preceding verse, means she has followed a righteous life in preparation for her marriage.

Verse 9. This will be one marriage and accompanying "refreshments" at which there will be no human guests but the bride. Hence the blessing pronounced on those who are called to the supper, means in reality the people should become a part of the espoused bride by becoming Christians. Before going further in the comments it will be well to make some explanatory remarks as to the "hour of the ceremony." Verse 7 says the marriage *is come*, when we know we will find that the work of the Reformation is to be gone over again by the vision. There will be no difficulty if the reader recalls that the book has more than once departed from the chronological order of events to take up some other period of the Christian Dispensation. Hence these preceding verses brought us down to the last day and announced the final marriage of Christ to his bride (the church). The vision will now take up some principles of a general character, then bring us again to the work just preceding the Reformation.

Verse 10. The pronouns *his* and *him* refer to the angel who was sent to show the vision to John (chapter 1: 1). It was natural for John to have this inclination toward worship of the angel, for the great vision shown made the apostle have a feeling of inferiority. There are some conditions when even a man may receive some form of worship from others (Luke 14: 10), but under the present circumstances it would have been improper. The reader may see a complete explanation of the word worship at Matthew 2: 2 in the first volume of the New Testament Commentary. *I am thy fellowservant* reminds us of Hebrews 1: 14. *Of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus*. This is equivalent to describing the ones for whom the angels are sent forth to minister. To *have* the testimony does not merely mean to have access to it (everyone has that), but it is those who hold themselves faithfully to it. *The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*. This means that the subject of Jesus as the Saviour of mankind is the main thought running through all the prophetic writings.

Verse 11. *White horse* symbolizes a war animal that is to engage in a war

for purity. The rider was Christ who is described as *Faithful and True*. That is because the war in which He is about to engage (the Reformation) is a righteous one.

Verse 12. Eyes of fire would signify that which is bright and penetrating. *Many crowns*. Actually no king wears more than one crown as far as the article as a unit is concerned, but in some way the ornamentations on it showed that Christ had won over all others. *Name no man knew* does not indicate some dark or mysterious secret, for verse 16 gives a great description of His name as written on his clothing. But no mere man can appreciate the name of Christ until he becomes His disciple.

Verse 13. *Vesture dipped in blood* is because Christ shed his blood for the sake of mankind. *The Word of God* is the name which all men can read and hence is not a secret, but they cannot realize what it means unless they appropriate that name to themselves by wholehearted obedience to its commandments. (See the name at John 1: 1.)

Verse 14. This is a symbolic picture of the war that is about to be fought against the beast that has been defying Heaven's authority for 1260 years.

Verse 15. The *sharp sword* is the *sword of the Spirit* (Ephesians 6: 17; Hebrews 4: 12). *Smite the nations* with this Word by the work of the Reformation. *Rule with a rod of iron*. Iron is both firm and severe, and it will be used in the latter sense against the wicked nations who have been supporting Babylon. *Treadeth the winepress* is explained at chapter 14: 10.

Verse 16. *King of kings and Lord of lords*. *King* indicates supreme authority and *lord* means one who governs the conduct of others. Jesus was given these two titles because He had overcome all who opposed him. Having the title attached to his *vesture* (clothing) was on the principle of decorations given men who have distinguished themselves in the service of their country.

Verse 17. When a man makes a great "killing" he often invites his friends to come and share the feast with him. The effects of the Reformation are symbolized in this and the following verse. It is especially appropriate to base the imagery on the fowls of the heaven, for they are generally thought to prefer feeding on the flesh

of animals that have been slain and left on the field. (See Matthew 24: 28.) The present case is one where the beasts were not killed and dressed as would be done ordinarily. They were to be killed to get them out of the way, and the birds might as well get the benefit of it since that is the kind of food they prefer. *Standing in the sun* was the appropriate place for the angel to stand where he could make his invitation to the creatures that live above the earth.

Verse 18. Of course this is symbolical of the defeat and destruction that is about to be imposed upon Babylon (church and state). Yet it is appropriate to use the symbols named because the conflict is actually to be with *kings* and their *captains* and *mighty men*, and these made use of *horses* in their warfare.

Verse 19. *Beast* is Babylon and the *kings* are the inferior rulers under her. All mustered their forces to resist the attack of Christ through the Reformation.

Verse 20. The *lake of fire* for the present is the destruction of Babylon, but in the day of judgment it will be the lake of fire that is unquenchable. The *false prophet* and *miracles* are explained at various passages preceding this.

Verse 21. The *remnant* means the straggling individuals who were left as "die-hards" after the beast of Babylon as a unit had been given a death blow by the Reformation.

## Revelation 20

General remarks. We have come to the climax of the book of Revelation as far as the symbolic predictions are concerned. The last two chapters have figurative language of the same kind that is frequently used all through the Bible, but they pertain to conditions that are to exist after the world comes to its end. The events still in the future (as of the place where this chapter belongs in the great drama of the book) will be predicted symbolically in this chapter, which starts at the time of the great Reformation. Before taking up the chapter verse by verse, I will offer a general note that will deal with the chapter in a more condensed form. Some of the verses will be enlarged upon as occasion suggests, but I urge that my readers make themselves familiar with this note as references may be made to it at certain places.

On Revelation 20: One of the keys to the understanding of this noted chapter is the fact that Satan was to be bound away from the *nations* and not from any individual. There never was a time when it was predicted that he was to be chained away from any individual: it was from *nations*. He always has had and still has access to individuals and the only thing that will keep him away from such is his individual faith in the Scriptures. By reason of the union of church and state the nations had been led to think they could not legislate nor decide on religious questions as they might have seen fit, but must take their cue from Rome. But when the Reformation broke and gave the Bible to various peoples in their own language so that they could read for themselves they saw, to their surprise, that they had been deceived all these years—that they did not need to depend on Rome. Since this truth became known to various kings, and the people under them, they turned their back against Rome, which resulted in the break-up of the union of church and state, and thus the deception that caused the *nations* to think they must ask Rome all about it was banished. Thus the devil by the chain of truth in the Reformation, was chained away from the *nations*, and the Reformation period was allowed to go on. This situation explains the statement in the forepart of the fourth verse that tells us of the “thrones and they sat upon them, their judgment was given unto them,” meaning that now they have learned of their own right to do their own judging instead of asking Rome about it. This was made possible by the facts just stated. Now about this time when Rome saw what it was about to amount to, she began to oppress the reformers and made life so bitter for some of them that it required the same fortitude and courage in facing Rome that had been required in the beginning of the Christian religion to face the oppression of Pagan Rome. These martyrs were equal to the occasion. They defied death and everything like it, and so nearly did they reenact the very spirit of the martyrs. As we sometimes say, that a certain individual though dead yet now speaks, meaning that someone has risen reproducing the same spirit and fortitude as the other person. So these reformers and co-workers in their courage and defiance of death, showed the spirit that the martyrs had shown and in this way

we could say that the martyrs were living again. Not that any individual who had really been dead had come to life. But they who loved the truth so much were willing to die rather than go back to Rome. In this way they were reenacting the spirit of the first martyrs and so could be said to be “living” again. And since through faith and courage those who are true to the Book have been said by Paul and others to be reigning with Christ, this explains why these people are said to be reigning with Christ. The arbitrary statement of a thousand years is one instance in the Bible where a definite amount is stated when the writer refers to an indefinite one. In this case the thousand years is just an expression referring to the bright period of the Reformation when those who loved the truth had been of Christ and reigned with him during that time.

This brings us to understand the statement in verses 5 and 6 about the first resurrection as follows: “Now this is the first resurrection.” The pronoun “this” instead of having an antecedent is a prospective pronoun and means the same as if the writer had said “I am going to tell you something of the first resurrection.” The man that has part in the first resurrection will not be hurt of the second death, which we understand from other scripture is the lake of fire. This is taught especially in the language expressed by Christ in his conversation with Martha (John 11: 25, 26). The expression “first resurrection” does not have any numerical significance, but is used to indicate its importance. It is the first resurrection in importance and not in numerical order since there will be but one resurrection numerically. If Christ is *the* resurrection, that would make it the first; and we note that the passage does not say “blessed and holy is he that” is in the first resurrection, but he that “hath part in” the first resurrection. And since Christ is the first resurrection, it follows that having part in the first resurrection means to have part in Christ, and hence this noted passage means simply the same that John 11: 25, 26 meant, the same as Christ meant when he said to the sister “I am the resurrection and the life” and also stated that those who continue in that faith in Him would never die. So the expression “shall never die” to Martha is equivalent to the expression “not hurt of the second death” here. And hence this passage

has no reference whatever to some visionary theory about reigning on this earth.

The expression in the forefront of verse 5, "rest of the dead" is explained to mean those people who did not have enough confidence in the truth to have died for it, as the martyrs had. Of course during this bright period of the Reformation their characteristics would not be in evidence so that is why it says they will not live again until the thousand years are finished, which means until the best part of the Reformation and its effects have run their course. And since the chaining of the devil meant to undeceive the *nations*, by the same token turning the devil loose again means he will again operate in a national and public manner. Not necessarily through the same nations of course, but it means that he will not be satisfied with his individual influence over men and women, but will wish to poison the public streams of thought and in so doing will raise a great conflict between the friends of truth and the friends of error. The "little season" referred to in this chapter is elsewhere called the battle of Armageddon. That battle is now going on and has been ever since the Reformation period began to lose its good effects. If one were to doubt what the devil is doing in a public wholesale manner, we cite the fact that in the state of New York a few years ago, the state chartered an institution whose avowed purpose was to advance atheism in all the schools and colleges in the United States, and thus such a charter authorized by the state is similar to the idea of the devil working through the nations. Almost every state in the Union is supporting and authorizing the teaching of evolution in the name of education which is another means of the devil to operate publicly; and all other like influences such as the support and endorsement of several nations and states and lawmakers authorizing things that have always heretofore been regarded as not even moral, much less according to the Bible, all go to the conclusion that the devil is now, as he was before the Reformation, working through public wholesale channels by influencing legislatures and kings and lawmakers in the direction of infidelity, thus producing the great battle of Armageddon. Trusting the reader has carefully read the foregoing note and will be able to make proper reference to it when it is suggested, I shall take up

this chapter by verses as has been done with others.

Verse 1. *Bottomless pit* is from ABUSSOS which means the place in Hades where angels are cast when they sin and where wicked men go when they die.

Verse 2. In this verse the four words *serpent, dragon, Devil and Satan* are applied to the same being, so that we need have no doubt as to the one who is meant. *Thousand years* is a figurative expression that is not bound by the calendar. In symbolic language the Bible does not restrict itself to exact mathematical values of the numbers mentioned. Sometimes the period will be longer and at others it will be shorter. I shall cite one or two examples by way of illustration on the matter of this use of figurative time. In Daniel 9: 24 a prediction is made of seventy weeks and we know it actually means 490 years. In chapter 6: 11 of our book the phrase *little season* really was to be until the Reformation which was several centuries in the future. The angel bound Satan with the chain mentioned in the preceding verse, and the chain was the Bible that was to be given back to the people in their own language. That chain bound him from the *nations*, which means the heads of the nations were able to see their rights by the information of the Book and realized that the devil had been deceiving them. When that occurred they resisted him and that chained him from them.

Verse 3. *Cast him into the bottomless pit* is symbolical of the restrictions that were placed upon Satan as to his influence over *nations*, for he has been there personally all the time. The restrictions were caused by the chain of the Bible that had been placed in the possession of the national leaders. (See again the note at beginning of this chapter.) These restrictions were to continue as long as the leaders of nations and other heads of the channels of thought continued their active defense of the Book. Knowing that human weakness would assert itself causing a letting down of the activities for the truth, the Lord saw the advantage it would give Satan and that he would again come out in his fight against the Bible. Hence it is stated that after the thousand years were expired—after the restrictions of the Bible had weakened due to the loss of activities of the professed friends of truth—Satan would be *loosed a little season. This little*

*season* is the same as the "battle" of verse 8 which will be discussed at that place.

Verse 4. *And I saw thrones . . . given unto them.* This is the same vision that is described at chapter 17: 12 and the reader should see the comments at that passage. The pronoun *they* means the kings who had occupied their thrones in form only, but who really had not been free to use their own judgment in their ruling. *Sat upon them* denotes that they were occupying their thrones in fact and not merely in name. *Judgment was given unto them* signifies they were allowed to render their own judgment in matters pertaining to their kingdoms. *Saw the souls . . . a thousand years.* Before reading further at this place, let the reader reexamine very carefully the first paragraph of the note referred to previously. That is especially necessary to get the significance of the thousand years of reign with Christ. The souls John saw were of those who were beheaded by Papal Rome because they refused to submit to her false demands. Their death recalls a like experience recorded in chapter 6: 9 of those who had been slain by Pagan Rome. These whom John saw in our present verse resisted the *beast* (Babylon), his *image* (those who imitated the beast) and the *mark* (those who brought upon themselves the guilt of doing the things originally incited by Nero.)

Verse 5. *Rest of the dead* is symbolical or figurative and refers to people who did not "have enough life" or interest to be active in defense of the truth. *Until the thousand years were finished.* When that bright period of the Reformation (here called the thousand years) was over and the former defenders of truth began to lag, then the enemies of the Bible "came to life" and became active in opposition to the word of God, acting under the influence of Satan who was now *loosed* in that the Bible was not binding him as it did. Such a movement stimulated the former "dead" ones to action and then was begun the conflict between the friends of truth and its enemies, a conflict that has continued to our day. *This is the first resurrection.* The pronoun does not refer directly to what has been said but to what is yet to be said, and it refers to the subject as a whole. John 11: 25, 26 should be considered in connection with the *first resurrection*, also read the note to which reference was made.

Verse 6. The *first resurrection* is that mentioned in the preceding verse of which John said he was going to speak. He is doing so now and telling us of the blessing that will be for those who have part in this *first resurrection*. In John 11: 25 Jesus says "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus was the first one to be resurrected never to die again (Acts 13: 34). To have part in the *first resurrection* means to have part in Christ. And to get the spiritual benefits of the resurrection of Christ as the bodily benefits, it is necessary to be faithful after coming into Him. That is what is meant in John 11: 26 by "liveth and believeth in me." That person "shall never die" according to Christ's statement to Martha, which means the same as *on such the second death hath no power* in our present verse. This *second death* is the punishment in the lake of fire and brimstone according to chapter 21: 8 of our present book. *Shall reign with him a thousand years.* This period is the same that is explained at verse 2. Of course the word *reign* is not literal because Christ is the sole King on the throne. Thayer's explanation of the word as it is used here is as follows: "Paul transfers the word to denote the supreme moral dignity, liberty, blessedness, which will be enjoyed by Christ's redeemed ones." The principle expressed will apply to the faithful in Christ of all ages. However, the present application is made to those who had been faithful to Christ under the persecutions of Babylon. This spirit of devotion in the presence of death was a reenactment of the spirit of the first martyrs (chapter 6: 9-11), and they lived (were in evidence) all through this bright period of the Reformation. It is in that sense only that they were to be resurrected and reign with Christ through the thousand years. There was no prediction of any literal resurrection of some while others were to remain in their graves. There will be but one bodily resurrection (and it is still future), and at that same hour all human beings, both good and bad, will be brought to life (Daniel 12: 2; John 5: 28, 29). It is plainly taught in other passages that when Jesus comes again it will mark the end of the kingdom and all things on the earth. (1 Corinthians 15: 24, 25; 2 Peter 3: 10). All statements of a resurrection that is to occur before the second coming of Christ are figurative only.

Verse 7. This is a repetition of verse 3.

Verse 8. The *nations* here are the same as in verse 3 as to the meaning of the word. But the identical groups of men who had been deceived by Satan before the Reformation would not be available to him in the same manner, for they still have the Bible in their own languages, and will always know better than to surrender their rights as nations with their kings again. But having found by experience the great advantage of working through the various headquarters, so as to effect a broad-scale opposition to the truth, he determined to direct his efforts along that line. Of course his objective is the destruction of the Bible or the faith of the people in it. That is why this great and long conflict is called Armageddon in chapter 16: 16, for one of the terms in Thayer's definition of the word is "destruction." Satan's strategy in this war was to use any means he could command that would destroy men's faith in the Book. *Gog* and *Magog* were ancient peoples and countries that were numerous, savage and at enmity with civilization. The words are used symbolically here to indicate the kind of forces and means that Satan would use in his war against the Bible. In the note referred to at the beginning of this chapter, it is shown that a phase of Satan's public attacks upon the Bible is in the form of evolution, seeing that it is taught in the public schools, also be chartered and endorsed by states and educational headquarters. The same objective is now being attempted in the form of communism. In proportion as a man believes in this doctrine he will not believe in the Bible and Satan knows it. That is why he is pressing its tenets upon the people through every channel possible. It accounts for the number of communists among the school teachers of our free school system. Also for the presence of communists and their sympathizers in the three branches of our government; the legislative, executive and judicial. I am sometimes asked if I believe the present conflict with Russia and her satellites was predicted. My answer is yes as the whole picture is considered. Communism is just the present objective in the war, the conflict being either for or against it. In that sense it was predicted for it is a continuation of the *battle* (war) of Armageddon, which was begun after Satan was loosed and is destined to continue until

Christ comes. As in most other wars, there are spies and sympathizers who pretend to be on the right side, but whose heart is in favor of the enemy. Such traitors either deny being communists or even refuse to say whether they are or not. We know that when a man refuses to answer questions on this subject when propounded by a proper person, that person is a communist at heart and should be regarded as one of Satan's soldiers in the war of Armageddon.

Verse 9. The pronoun *they* stands for the hostile forces of Satan symbolically mustered from the regions of Gog and Magog. This is the army of Satan that is described in the preceding paragraph. They will fight under his directions with the object of destroying men's faith in the Bible. The apostate church of Rome taught that the religious conduct of men should be regulated according to the pope and his college of cardinals. The teaching of Christ is that men's lives should be regulated by the Bible (1 Peter 4: 11; 1 John 1: 7), that the sole institution for making that Book known is the church (Ephesians 3: 10, 21; 1 Timothy 3: 15). Hence the army of Satan was to compass the *camp of the saints*. This means the church when considered as a group of individuals, and *the beloved city* means the church if spiritual Jerusalem is used as a symbol. So here is where the issue is joined in this great battle of Armageddon. The church of Christ is on one side, and everything else is on the other in all controversies that involve moral and religious interests, and where belief in or opposition to the Bible is at stake. The first two thirds of this brief verse covers the entire period of the war of Armageddon, beginning when Satan was loosed and extending to the coming of Christ. The last sentence of the verse marks the end of the war. Not that it tells of the date (no passage does), but it names the event that will bring the conflict to a close, namely, the consuming fire out of heaven. We are told in 2 Thessalonians 2: 8 that the pope will be destroyed at the coming of Christ. It is very fitting that the war of Armageddon should be destroyed at the same time, since the pope and Satan have been allies arrayed against the forces of Christ for centuries. And with this verse the prophetic symbols of the book of Revelation bring us to the judgment day for the final showing. At various places in our study we have



been brought to that event, then taken back to some earlier period and started all over again. But the rest of the chapter will describe the events on the day of judgment and not go back.

Verse 10. *Devil that deceived them* refers to the vast hordes who comprised the army of Satan. This verse says nothing about the fate of the deceived ones; that will be shown later. This is the lake of fire and brimstone that is mentioned in chapter 21: 8. Tormented *day and night* is figurative as to the parts of the time for there will be no recurrence of day and night literally. The expression is used to give emphasis to the literal part of the sentence, namely, *for ever and ever*. In other words there will be no "breathing spell" or even brief intermission for the sake of relief; it will be continuous and endless.

Verse 11. *Great white throne* signifies purity and justice. *From whose face . . . fled away . . . no place for them*. This agrees with the next chapter that will tell us of the new heaven and earth.

Verse 12. *Small and great*. In God's eyes there are no "big I and little you," so the phrase is used only to denote that all human beings will be brought before the judgment. This conclusion also agrees with the literal statements of scripture in other passages (2 Corinthians 5: 10). *Books* occurs twice in this verse and it is stated that the judgment will be rendered according to the *works* that are written in the books. Hence the *books* means God's books of remembrance. (See Psalms 56: 8; Malachi 3: 16.) God does not literally need the mechanical use of books, but the words are used symbolically to impress us with the truth that none of the things we do will escape His knowledge. The *other* book is described as the *book of life*. It is referred to in the last verse as containing the names of the faithful servants of the Lord. This same thought is expressed in chapter 21: 27; Luke 10: 20; Philippians 4: 3. Upon the basis of this information we may conclude that the *books* were the records of men's actions, and the *book of life* contained a list of those whose conduct had caused their names to be written in this book, and whose continued good deeds had prevented their names from being *blotted out* (chapter 3: 5).

Verse 13. The preceding verse makes a general statement of the persons to be summoned before the judgment.

"Small and great" would virtually include all human beings that ever lived. The present verse gives particulars, doubtless to impress us with the completeness of the resurrection of all persons regardless of where their bodies and spirits had been, even including the sea with its millions of ravenous creatures to feed upon the bodies of the dead. *Death* refers to the dead bodies and *hell* (from HADES), is the place where the spirits had been. Both will be reunited and brought before the judgment.

Verse 14. *Death* (of the body) and *hell* (HADES), will not be needed any longer, hence they will be consigned to the lake of fire. Not all men, of course, but the ones who will be designated in the next verse.

Verse 15. This explains who is meant in the preceding verse to be cast into the lake of fire. In order to avoid such a doom it behooves us all to get our names written in the book of life, then live so that they will not be blotted out.

## Revelation 21

General remarks. When this and the next chapter are being considered, it is usually asked if the statements are literal or figurative. And as a rule no distinction is made between the righteous and the wicked when asking the question. Evidently a distinction should be made since the conditions of the persons themselves will not be the same. At any rate we do not have the specific information concerning that of the wicked that we do of the righteous. Therefore I believe it will be well to offer some remarks on this matter before taking up the verses. It is known that the Bible uses both literal and figurative language all through the volume, which is true of most compositions of literature. It is also true that a statement might be made of some truth or fact that could be correctly applied in either way, depending on how the statement is worded. For instance it might be declared of a certain thing that it is dead. But that might be said of its personal being and mean that it is dead because the life has actually gone out of it. Or it might be declared to be dead because the whole being is separated from something else, the word "death" meaning a separation. But if the statement is made from the former standpoint the meaning would be literal, and if from the other the figurative sense should be understood.

It will be necessary, therefore, to consider the context in specific passages in determining which form of language is used.

There is no direct information nor promise for the wicked to have a spiritual or glorious body after the resurrection. Any positive affirmation that may be made on this matter must be done in the absence of any declaration in the Bible. As far as the promises or information are concerned, the wicked will go into the next world with the same kind of bodies they had when they left this world. That is not so concerning those who die in Christ, for there are many passages that promise them a body that will be changed from a fleshly to a spiritual character. Hence it is an unavoidable conclusion that the future circumstances of the righteous must be the kind that can be experienced and enjoyed by a person who is wholly spiritual. Then a logical question may be asked as to why the Lord would use language that is apparently literal if it must be understood figuratively. It is in order to bring the divine thoughts to within the human understanding. Isaiah 55: 9 says of God: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." If the thoughts of God are that much higher than those of man, had He clothed his thoughts in language correspondingly high, then man never could have comprehended them. For that reason the heavenly thoughts are expressed in human terms. Accordingly Paul says, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh" (Romans 6: 19).

Man would have no other way of appreciating a description of the future after this life except by such a form of speech. Even the inspired apostle John did not know what we will be in the next life (1 John 3: 2). Hence in giving man a description of the eternal state of the righteous, it is often contrasted with things we dislike and compared with what we enjoy. And even such illustrations may be relative only, for a thing may be desirable from one standpoint and undesirable from another. To cite a single instance we are told that "there shall be no night there." That is said from the standpoint that we prefer the daylight to darkness. And yet from another we might think favorably of the night because it brings us

the cooling atmosphere and the time of rest. And so all of these thoughts should be observed when considering the two chapters now before us. I will offer another suggestion before starting into the comments on the verses. God never exaggerates the truth, and in giving us a description of the future condition of mankind, He has not made it look any stronger than it actually will be. If the description of the fate of the lost is figurative only, then what will be the literal state? Likewise, if the home of the soul as described in these chapters is pictured in figurative language only, then how wonderful the real situation will be! In the words of the song: "We speak of the realms of the blest, that country so bright and so fair; and oft are its glories confessed, but what must it be to be there! We speak of its pathways of gold, of its walls decked with jewels so rare; of its wonders and pleasures untold, but what must it be to be there!" And thus on the basis of the foregoing paragraphs, I shall try to explain the various descriptions given in these closing chapters of the great Book.

Verse 1. *New heaven and a new earth.* The heavens means the atmospheric region surrounding the earth and is a part of the same unit in creation. The home of the redeemed is called by the phrase "heaven and earth" because that is the present kind of home man lives in. If we were birds instead of men the vision would have showed John a "new nest." This new heaven and earth is what Jesus means in Matthew 5: 5 where He says, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." It is the one Peter is looking for when he says, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3: 13). *No more sea.* This is an instance of a kind referred to in the general remarks, where the application must be made upon the basis of the context. In some respects we can think of the sea in a favorable light, with its wondrous treasures and submarine plants, and the innumerable varieties of food to gratify our appetites. But we know the vision is to show something desirable on the basis of contrast, and that makes us think of the ceaseless unrest and destructive billows that engulf men and ships.

Verse 2. *Holy city new Jerusalem* means the church that is to be united

at the last day in the final marriage of Christ as the bridegroom. (See the comments at chapter 19: 7.) Paul speaks of the church as the "heavenly Jerusalem" in Hebrews 12: 22, and he also speaks of it as the city that is above and is free and "the mother of us all" (Galatians 4: 26). *Prepared* refers to the condition a bride brings to herself in view of her approaching marriage.

Verse 3. *Tabernacle* is used figuratively to represent the place where a person resides. It is used here as a symbol of the close association that will exist between God and his people in the eternal age. He will not merely honor the saved of men by making a call upon them but will come and *dwell* with them. That does not mean that God will descend from his lofty condition so that man would think of having a guest that is his equal in rank. He will still be God and the redeemed of men will still compose a people, but notwithstanding this great difference He will be a gracious Friend to give the honor of divine "company" to the creatures made in His image.

Verse 4. *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*. Upon hearing this read once a little girl was caused to exclaim, "God must have a large handkerchief." I report this because she was making the same erroneous interpretation of the passages that many older people make. That is because they forget that they are reading in a book that was written on the basis of symbols. The significance of the statement is that the tears will be wiped away by removing or preventing anything that could cause tears; the next words of the verse agree with this explanation. *There shall be no more death*. The Saviour of men went down into the depths of death and came out again, bringing with Him the eternal victory over it, thus removing the possibility for the "grim monster" ever again to overcome those who are accounted worthy of the "better resurrection" with either physical or spiritual death. This will prevent *sorrow, crying and pain*, which explains how God will wipe away all tears. *Former things are passed away* will be true at that period beyond the resurrection of the righteous.

Verse 5. *He that sat upon the throne* is the same as was shown in chapter 20: 11. He is the one who created all things that exist, but all the items that were made in the first creation

pertaining to the material universe will be replaced with a new order of things that will be eternal, and adapted to the needs and enjoyment of the glorified part of humanity. The pronoun *he* means the angel who has been John's companion and exhibitor all through the vision of this book. Having taken a view of these wonderful objects the angel tells John to write the description in his book, and assures him that all that he has seen and heard is *true and faithful*, which means the vision and the words are a faithful report of the truth.

Verse 6. *It is done* is the same thing that was said as reported at chapter 16: 17. The expression signifies that everything planned by the Lord and predicted for the period up to the point at hand has been accomplished. *Alpha and Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and the phrase is used symbolically, signifying that Jesus has been connected with all things done by his Father throughout. The same truth is meant by the following phrase, *the beginning and the end*. *I will give*, etc. Having completed everything necessary for the redemption and glorification of man, He is prepared to offer the benefit of the plan to humanity. It will be *freely* means not only that it is not something that can be purchased with silver and gold, but also that it will be supplied in abundance. Another condition that should be noticed is the offer is made to those who are *athirst*. The Lord's favors have always been offered on such a condition. Jesus said (Matthew 5: 6), "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." He also specified in the great invitation to "come unto me" that He meant those who were "heavy laden." There is nothing selfish or arbitrary about this, for only those who sincerely desire the water of life would relish its taste if they even attempted to drink it.

Verse 7. *He that overcometh* is another of the principles that distinguish the favor of God from what is generally offered by man. It is not to the strongest and successful ones, for then there would be many worthy people who would lose out, for few if any can be successful when that word is used in its ordinary sense. But the reward is to those who *overcome*, and 1 John 5: 4 states that faith is the means by which we may overcome. That brings the blessings of God within reach of

all men since all can have faith whether they are those of one or five talents. *Inherit all things* logically has to mean the things to which reference has just been made concerning the new creation. *Be his God . . . be my son* is the same close association that is mentioned and commented upon at verse 3.

Verse 8. *Fearful* is from *DEILOS*, which Thayer defines, "timid, fearful," and he then explains it to denote "Christians who through cowardice give way under persecutions and apostatize [deny their Lord]. This definition or explanation is justified by the next word in the text, namely, the *unbelieving*. *Abominable* is from *BDELUSO*, and Thayer's definition is "to render foul, to cause to be abhorred." It is a word that would have a general meaning, hence the apostle follows up with a number of specifications. *Whoremongers* are men who do not merely commit adultery on some specific occasion (which of itself would be wrong), but who are regular patrons of women whose business is to receive men either for lust or money. *Sorcerers* is from *PHARMAKENS*, and Thayer's lexicon defines it, "one who prepares or uses magical remedies; a sorcerer." It could well be classed with the "dope" trade of our day. *Idolaters* is defined, "A worshipper of false gods." That is its literal meaning and makes it apply to any conduct where a man shows a preference for something over the true God. Hence Paul declares in Ephesians 5: 5 that a covetous man is an idolater. *All liars* is rendered "liars of all kinds" by Moffatt. That rendering is evidently correct for it would be unnecessary to state that every liar is meant in the sense of not allowing some of them to escape; that would be taken for granted. But it means to include not only those who in the direct sense make positive statements that are false, but also everyone who says or does anything for the purpose of making a false impression. When Ananias and his wife deposited some money before Peter there is no evidence that they actually said anything about it until Peter forced them to speak. But yet he accused them of lying because they intended to make a false impression upon the apostle. Therefore we should understand that all deliberate attempts to deceive another will be regarded as lies. It can be done even by stating a part of the truth in such a way as to make a false impression. Paul

doubtless was thinking of this when he declared he was not "handling the word of God deceitfully" (2 Corinthians 4: 2). *Have their part*. They will not receive any part of the good things that have just been promised to the faithful. Their fate will be to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the place designated by the Greek word *GEHENNA*. *Which is the second death*. It is called this because all mankind are bound to die physically (Hebrews 9: 27) on account of the sin of Adam. But the wicked will die (be separated) from God for ever and have to remain in this lake of fire away from God.

Verse 9. The original angel who came to John at the beginning of the vision has not left the isle, but occasionally there will be an extra conversation permitted for some one or more of the other persons introduced from time to time. For instance, one of the elders (chapter 5: 5), the beasts or living creatures (chapter 6: 1, 3, 5, 7), the voice from heaven (chapter 10: 8), one of the seven angels (chapter 17: 1) and the one in our verse. John heard many other voices from time to time, but the ones to which reference is made talked to him. This angel of our verse invited John to see a vision of the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Verse 10. *He carried me away* was not literal because John never actually left the isle any time through the scenes of this book. The sense in which it was done is signified by the words *in the spirit*. These extra visions injected into the over-all picture of this book, may be illustrated by certain special items called "insets" that are often seen within the scope of some large picture. They serve as explanations of some outstanding feature. In this special vision John saw a mountain from the top of which he could get a good view of what the angel wished him to see. The angel told John he would show him the bride, the Lamb's wife, and when he looked he saw a city instead. That is because the bride is the church (Ephesians 5: 25-33), and also the church is likened to a city (Hebrews 12: 22, 23). Having transferred the imagery from a woman to a city, the following passages will be a description of a beautiful city. It is called *holy Jerusalem* because that title is attached to the church "which is the mother of us all" (Galatians 4: 26). *Descending out of heaven from God*.

That was very appropriate because while the church is composed of men and women on the earth, the design and origin of it were from the dwelling place of God.

Verse 11. *Having the glory of God* is understandable because anything that comes from heaven would be adorned with the glory of God. The glory of the city was so great that John likens it to the rays of a precious stone. There is something most significant about using precious stones as symbols in describing the splendors of the celestial city. We have all beheld diamonds and other precious jewels and admired their glittering brilliance. However, we have observed also that the greatest degree of their beauty is caused by the light that is reflected upon them from some outside source. So with these precious stones that bedeck the city of God; they obtain their glow from the light that radiates from the throne of God. The one named in this verse is only referred to for a comparison, but the actual use of the stones themselves will be described in a later place in this chapter. The jasper that is used to compare the brilliant light is described as being *clear as crystal*. That is a description of a diamond which is among the most attractive of stones.

Verse 12. The dimensions of the wall will be noticed at verses 16 and 17, but here they are briefly stated to be *great and high*. In old times the most important cities were surrounded with walls, hence it is a desirable asset to say this city was walled. It is significant that it was great and high. That would indicate good protection from the enemies, since the wall was too high to be scaled and too great or strong to be penetrated or beaten down. Among the numerical symbols that have been very prominent in this book are four and its multiples, twelve and four and twenty. Four was the number of the living creatures that represented the redeemed from the four corners of the earth. Twelve was used if the organized systems that God has had are being considered from one dispensation alone, either the Mosaic or the Christian. That is because there were twelve tribes in the one and twelve apostles in the other. Hence it is appropriate that John should see the twelve gates to this city representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve apostles will be pointed out later, but it was in order to show the

twelve tribes first because the Mosaic system was first given.

Verse 13. The tabernacle of the Mosaic system had much beauty in its formation, and also in the garments of the priestly service. That was not as an encouragement to vanity or doing something for mere show. But God is the designer and maker of all things, and those that are seen in the universe that are beautiful are not so by accident. Among the items that contribute to the beauty of any structure is the symmetry of its arrangement. A city that is foursquare should not have a varying number of gates in its walls. There are twelve gates to this city and the equal distribution of them in sets of three is very appropriate. It might have seemed sufficiently clear to say that the gates were equally divided amidst the four sides of the city. However, this is supposed to be a somewhat poetical or picturesque description of a very superb spot, and it is fitting to go into these details.

Verse 14. This completes the full representations corresponding to the four and twenty elders. The twelve gates stand for the tribes of Israel, and here are the twelve original apostles of Christ. There is nothing said about angels in connection with the twelve apostles as there was with the twelve gates. That is doubtless because gates call for guards at the entrance of an important city, while a foundation is a more fixed part of a structure and does not call for supervision. In literal architecture there would be actually only one foundation to a building. Yet it might be built of several stones as was this one, and each stone is spoken of as a foundation. In literal language it would be one foundation but composed of a number of stones. In truth that is the way Paul speaks of the church in Ephesians 2:20 where he says Christians are built upon the foundation (singular) of the apostles and prophets. It is common to see important names engraved on stones composing a building. It generally is of persons who have made valuable contributions to the structure. From that standpoint it is significant to have the names of the apostles on these stones.

Verse 15. *He that talked with me* means the angel who had been sent to give John the vision. This angel had the measuring reed and he did

the measuring. A *reed* in nature is produced on the banks or near the edge of bodies of water and the stems are used for various purposes. The one the angel had was an artificial one and was made of bright and precious metal. Such an instrument was proper for the important matter of measuring divine things. We are not told the capacity of this measuring rule as we might do in the case of a literal measuring stick, such as a yardstick or foot measure. We have only the computation after the angel did the measuring.

Verse 16. The city was a cube, the length and breadth and height being equal. The measurement was twelve thousand furlongs, which is fifteen hundred miles. For an approximate estimate to help us visualize the size of that city, let us think that if a man were to start at the Gulf of Mexico and travel to the Great Lakes, he would have made the journey along one side only of the city. It is true that the eternal city will not be restricted to miles as we measure distances, but the figures are intended to give us some impression of the abundant provision that God has made for the saved of all ages.

Verse 17. In the preceding verse the angel measured the *city* which gave the length of it. In this verse he *measured the wall* which necessarily means the thickness of it. The measurement was a hundred and forty and four cubits, another multiple of one of our prominent numbers, twelve. *Measure of a man, that is, of the angel.* This unusual language only means that the angel used the same action in measuring the wall that a man would use in such a situation. The usual length of a cubit is eighteen inches, hence this wall was two hundred and sixteen feet thick. Such would be a proper thickness to be proportionate to such a height.

Verse 18. The body of the wall was of jasper, which we are told in verse 11 is a substance that is "clear as crystal" thus describing a diamond. Let us try to see with our mind's eye a diamond that is fifteen hundred miles in diameter and we will have a mental picture of one side of this city. *City was pure gold* means the street of it according to verse 21. Gold is a metal (not a stone), hence the likeness to *clear glass* is explained in verse 21 as of *transparent glass*. Literal gold is one of the most condensed

of metals and hence would naturally be the opposite of transparent. So we should understand that the metal was so pure and the texture so fine that it would take on a very high polish. It was so much that way that in looking upon it one would really seem to see a substance that his eyes were penetrating (as if they were performing the action of an X-ray), when in reality he was beholding something with an incomprehensibly high gloss.

Verse 19. The foundation stones of the wall were garnished (decorated) with *all manner* of precious stones, which means with stones of various descriptions. The first was *jasper* which we have previously learned is like a diamond. *Sapphires* are of several varieties and no special one is named, but the general description in the English dictionaries shows them to be brilliant gems inclined to be transparent. A *chalcedony* is a stone with a blue tint and a glossy surface. *Emerald* is a stone with rich coloring of green and very much prized as a precious stone.

Verse 20. A *sardonyx* is described by Thayer as follows: "A precious stone marked by the red color of the carnelian (sard) and the white of the onyx." A *sardius* is a flesh-colored stone. Thayer says a *chrysolite* is "a precious stone of a golden color," and he says a *beryl* is "a precious stone of a pale green color." A *topaz* is a stone of a greenish-yellow color as given by Thayer. *Chrysoprasus*. Thayer defines this as follows: "A precious stone in color like a leek, of a translucent [transparent] golden-green." A *jacinth* is also the name of a flower (commonly called a hyacinth). The color of it and the stone by the same name is dark-blue, almost black. Thayer says an *amethyst* is a precious stone of a violet and purple color.

Verse 21. *Every several gate was of one pearl.* There is nothing said nor intimated that the gates resembled pearls or were merely as beautiful as pearls. No, the first phrase is, *the twelve gates were twelve pearls*. And we should take for granted that the Lord would not use any but genuine pearl, but He would also use the best of it for the construction of a city to be the eternal home of the redeemed, where they are to share the glory with Him and all the celestial beings that He has created. I will quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary some information about pearls: "The finest



specimens of the pearl are yielded by the pearl oyster . . . the oysters grow in clusters on rock in deep water, and the pearl is found inside the shell, and is the result of a diseased secretion caused by the introduction of foreign bodies, etc., between the mantle and the shell . . . The size of a good Oriental pearl varies from that of a pea to about three times that . . . Pearls have been valued as high as \$200,000 apiece." Now let us do some calculating and try to form some idea of the beauty and value of just the gates to the celestial city. Everything thus far has been in the proportions that would be required for beauty, hence these gates would be of the width and height that would not be out of proportion. In a wall fifteen hundred miles high and two hundred and sixteen feet thick, any opening of ordinary dimensions would look like a tunnel more than an entrance to a city of residence. We are not given the actual dimensions of the gates, but in order to bring them near enough for us to do some kind of calculating, we know they would not have been less than a hundred feet wide and two hundred feet high. If a pearl three times the size of a pea is worth two hundred thousand dollars, then one pearl as large as I have suggested (and doubtless these gates were larger) would be worth many times more than all the wealth of the world, and besides this, there were twelve of these costly gems. I would be willing to give a year or more of the severest kind of service just to see one of those gates.

Verse 22. *I saw no temple.* John was thinking of the temple that was in the literal city of Jerusalem, and was contrasting that situation with what he saw in the vision. Even that temple which was built for the service to God was not good enough nor big enough to contain Him (1 Kings 8: 27; Acts 7: 47-50), much less would He need a temple to confine him when He is already occupying the whole city.

Verse 23. The sun, moon and stars were necessary to give light upon the earth, but that planet will have passed away. The light that would be adapted to glorified residents of the eternal city would need to be more brilliant than a multitude of suns such as we now see. But the city will not be without light for the glory of God and the Son will lighten it. Think of a Being so bright and glorious that its rays would reach from wall to wall in a city 1,500 miles

wide. No wonder Moses was not permitted to come within the rays of that glory.

Verse 24. *Nations and kings* of the earth will not come into the city literally, for those relationships are of a temporal nature. This verse is based on the practice in ancient times that required a captive city to pay tribute to a city that had overcome it. Doubtless there will be men who had been kings, and others who were citizens of the nations ruled by these kings, who will have become servants of God and who will be among the many thousands who will throng that city.

Verse 25. *The gates shall not be shut at all by day* (or day by day). This also is based upon the practice of ancient cities closing their gates at the approach of night (Joshua 2: 5). John says there will not be any need for such a performance, for *there shall be no night there*. It is his way of emphasizing the absence of night, for there will be no enemy who could enter the city any way.

Verse 26. This is the same as verse 24.

Verse 27. The evils named have been fully described previously, but I will cite the remarks at verse 8 about liars. Those whose names are in *the book of life* is explained at chapter 20: 15.

## Revelation 22

Verse 1. The pronoun *he* refers to the angel who has been with John all through the vision of this book. There is nothing more pleasing to the eye than a flowing body of water. It signifies something that is constant and moving with majestic procedure. But many rivers are attractive from these standpoints only, while within them may be vicious creatures that would devour helpless victims that came within reach. Also there may be much that is vile and foul, carrying with them the waste materials of the cities. But the river John saw had nothing of that kind because it had not been in contact with any place containing filth. Instead, its source is the throne of God and the Lamb where there can be nothing vile. For this reason the river is pure and also clear as crystal because there are no materials to becloud the stream. It is called *water of life* because it is always moving (never stagnant) and because of the quality and purity described in the foregoing comments.

Verse 2. *In the midst of the street of it* means the street of the city, and the river of life flowed down the center of the street. This description will give us no difficulty if we will think of the "divided highways" that grace our country in many places. Let us think of a river flowing from an inexhaustible fountain and proceeding on through a beautiful city. On each bank is a row of fruit trees that serve a double purpose, namely, furnish ornamentation for the crystal stream, and a source of food for those who are walking upon the section of the "divided highway" that one may be using. To clarify the description we think of it in this manner. First is a section of the street, next a row of trees, next the river, next another row of trees and then the other section of the street. *Tree of life.* This tree is promised to all who overcome the contests of life (chapter 2: 7). The phraseology is based on the tree of life that was in the garden of Eden. It will be well for us again to remember we are still in a book of symbols, where the Lord is giving us a picture of Heaven in as strong terms as our human mind can grasp. The tree is spoken of in the singular number because there was but one in the garden. But the varieties are not limited to one, because this tree is pictured in connection with spiritual things. Here we have another instance of the numeral that has been so prominent throughout this book. That is twelve which is a multiple of four (the four creatures), and the number each of the two organized systems of salvation that God has given the world. The special significance of the twelve here is to show the fruit-bearing season is continuous and perennial, but a different kind of fruit will be produced each month, so that no occasion will exist for longing after a change; there will be one coming each month. Many kinds of fruit trees not only produce fruit, but also their leaves have medicinal value in them. Thus we are told that the leaves of this tree have healing qualities. Not that any citizens will become sick, but it is on the same principle of wiping away all tears (chapter 21: 4). The leaves of this tree will heal the people by keeping them in such a condition that sickness will be impossible.

Verse 3. *No more curse* is an allusion to the curse pronounced upon the ground because of the sin of Adam (Genesis 3: 17). Instead of a curse

there will be endless blessings because not only will the tree of life be in the city (as it was in the garden), but God and the Lamb will themselves be there. Also all creatures who would tempt the righteous will have been consigned to their eternal place in the lake of fire. *Servants shall serve him.* It is sometimes asked if the saved are to be entirely free in that city, since it is spoken of as the place of rest for God's people. The word *serve* does not necessarily mean labor or toil. The word is from LATREUO and at this place Thayer's definition (the words in italics) is as follows: "To render religious service or homage, to worship." It certainly will be only unspeakable pleasure to engage in such employment as worshipping God in his immediate presence, when faithful disciples have taken real happiness from their worship of Him while in the world. In the words of one of the old songs of the church, it will be a service in a time and place "Where congregations ne'er break up, and rest days have no end."

Verse 4. *Shall see his face* is mentioned to indicate the great intimacy that will exist between God and the creatures that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Persons spending some time in a city where many others are present, may be seen with pennants attached to their clothing for the purpose of identification. In this celestial city the name will be on the person, on the most conspicuous part of it, the forehead. How different this is from the condition of the members of the apostate church; they had the mark of the beast in their forehead (chapter 14: 9).

Verse 5. *Shall be no night there.* (See the comments at chapter 21: 25.) *Need no candle neither light of the sun.* This is one of the most significant symbols used in this series, because it includes the two extremes on the subject. A candle is an artificial light and the weakest that man has devised. The sun is God's own direct work and is the strongest light in all the natural creation. In saying that neither will be needed in the celestial city, John is giving us the greatest possible picture of the strength of the light that will radiate from the throne of God; although he was to be the lawgiver, Moses was a natural man. And 1 Timothy 6: 16 says God is "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." *They shall reign for ever and ever.*

The word *reign* may raise a question in connection with the truth that even Jesus is said to reign only until death has been conquered (1 Corinthians 15: 25, 26). The explanation lies in the definitions of the original word. The Greek original is *BASILEUO*, which means "to reign," but in our passage Thayer explains it to mean "to denote the supreme moral dignity, liberty, blessedness, which will be enjoyed by Christ's redeemed ones." Hence the word does not necessarily mean to rule as a king. It is a figurative term and denotes a situation where a certain condition prevails. It is like saying that "all difficulties were removed and peace again reigned." We have the blessed assurance from the apostle that the condition of such a reign will continue *for ever and ever*.

Verse 6. *He said* means the angel said it to John. *Faithful and true*. These words are virtually the same in their fundamental meaning, and either could properly be used in place of the other for general purposes. Technically they mean the words or sayings just delivered by the angel are worthy of being relied on because they are true. *Of the holy prophets* is referred to as an evidence that His sayings are worthy of being relied on, for the predictions that God enabled the prophets to make were fulfilled in the proper time. For that reason there should be no doubt concerning the predictions that He has authorized his servants to make in the present book. *Sent his angel*. This refers to the angel who has been with John from the beginning of his vision on the isle. *Must shortly be done*. The Englishman's Greek New Testament renders this phrase, "must come to pass soon." The word in question is a relative term, for even a number of centuries would be short when compared with the endlessness of what will come after the judgment day. However, since this period in the vision of John is at the near approach of the last day (as to the events predicted), the end is literally close at hand.

Verse 7. *Quickly* is from the same word as "shortly" in the preceding verse. *Blessed* means happy, denoting a condition entirely satisfactory. *Keepeth* is from *TEREO* and in the King James Version it is translated hold fast 1 time, keep 57, observe 4, preserve 2, reserve 8, watch 2. It is a word with many shades of meaning which must be determined in each place according to the connection. If it is used in rela-

tion to things a man is required to do, then it means he must understand and do them. If used only of things stated as truths, whether they are predictions or otherwise, then the word means we are to believe them and keep them in respectful remembrance. The present verse applies the word to the prophecy of this book, hence it has the meaning just described. However, it would imply some activities on the part of man, for among the things predicted is the judgment day on which men will be judged according to their deeds. Hence if a man believes and respects that prediction, he will not forget it but will fashion his life in such a way as to be adjudged worthy of everlasting life. This explains why the angel said those were *blessed* or happy who *keepeth the sayings*.

Verse 8. *These things* refer to the vision of the celestial city and what the angel said about it. In chapter 19: 10 John attempted to worship the angel but was prevented. Hence the *things* of our verse would have to apply to what had come before him since that time. The word *worship* is one of the terms in the Greek New Testament that have many shades of meaning, because it is from a dozen original words with about that many different definitions. Hence not every form or kind of worship would be condemned. The word as used in our verse and the following one, also in chapter 19: 10, means to prostrate oneself before another as a recognition of superiority in rank. Such an attitude is due only to God and his Son. Angels are not superior to men as to their personal merit nor even in authority. In the great sphere of service to God the angels are only some of His servants. That is the reason that the angel assigned for his instructions to John in this place and also in chapter 19: 10 refused to be worshipped. And it is the same reason why Peter refused the worship from Cornelius in Acts 10: 25, 26 saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." This does not condemn the acts of homage that are paid to kings or other dignitaries as was the custom in old time and is yet in some countries. Those performances pertain to matters of social or legal standing, while the word under consideration in our passages has to do with authority in religion. For a complete analysis of this word according to the lexicon and concordance, see the comments at Matthew 2: 2 in the first volume of the New Testament Commentary.

Verse 9. Many comments that would be suggested on this verse were made on the preceding one. There were two phases of devotion to God in which John and the angel were in the same class, namely, *fellowservant* and *prophet*. The first will apply to all of the Lord's disciples while the second pertains to their work in predicting future events. But neither of these services entitles a man to receive worship from another, so the angel told John to *worship God*.

Verse 10. *Seal* is from SPHRAGIZO, which Thayer defines at the passage, "keep in silence, keep secret." In the beginning of our study of this book, we were told that the future experiences of the church in its relations with the governments were unrevealed. That was indicated by a book (containing visions of the future) that was sealed, and it required the inspiration of Christ to reveal it. At some time before the Christian Dispensation (we know not how long) God composed the subject matter that makes up the book of Revelation, but since the events were not to be fulfilled "for many days" as Daniel was told (Daniel 12: 1-4), He sealed them up in the book we are studying. When the time came to begin making them known He enabled the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" to break the seals. But at the point reached by us in the vision there is nothing depending on future developments—the *time is at hand*—hence there is no reason for sealing it up.

Verse 11. The preceding verse must be remembered in connection with this one in order to get the full meaning of the passage—it is very vital. We are arrived at the judgment day (in the vision) when the final and eternal lot of all intelligent creatures will be announced for good. After this there will never be any change either for better or worse with anyone. The *unjust* and *filthy* will always be so, and the *righteous* and *holy* likewise will remain so. That is why there will never be any sin committed in Heaven by angel or man after the judgment. Neither will there be any chance for reformation on the part of the creatures in the lake of fire.

Verse 12. *I come quickly* is explained at verse 7. *My reward is with me*. When Jesus comes again it will not be for the purpose of setting up another reign on the earth, for all of His reign will then come to a close (1 Corinthians 15: 24-26). The lot of both

just and unjust will have been decided at that time, and Christ will be coming to bestow the reward according to that decision. It is in that sense that the reward will be *with Him*—not coming merely to announce what it is going to be. He will at that time recompense either "tribulation" or "rest" upon mankind (2 Thessalonians 1: 6, 7), which is the meaning of the present passage. The basis on which the rewards will be distributed is *according as his work shall be*.

Verse 13. This is virtually the same as chapter 1: 8; see those comments.

Verse 14. *Blessed* is from MAKARIOS, and in the King James Version it has been rendered "blessed" 43 times and "happy" 6 times. The reason for their blessedness or happiness is their *right* to the tree of life. The word *right* is from the word EXOUSIA, which also means power or authority. It is a very serious passage in view of the notions of many people as to the lot of the unsaved. As an outburst of sentiment or emotion it is said, "How could God refuse to admit any person to the eternal happiness when He has it within his power to grant it." But the last part of the statement is not true, for God cannot do that which is not right. (Titus 1: 2; 2 Timothy 2: 13.) If those who do the commandments are the ones who have the *right* to the tree of life, then it would not be right for others to have access to it. And if they would not have a right to it, it would be wrong for them to have it. And since God cannot do wrong it follows that He cannot admit any person to the city who has not done the commandments. It is clear that having right to the tree of life requires the right for entrance into the city, for we learned at verse 2 that the tree is growing inside the city.

Verse 15. *Without* means on the outside of the eternal city. The preceding verse reveals who will be permitted to enter the city and this one tells some of the kind that will not enter. *Dogs*. It would be foolish to think this is used with reference to the dumb brute, for it would not be more true of the dog than of all others of the animal kingdom. 2 Peter 2: 12 informs us that the beasts are destined to be destroyed; there will be no "hereafter" for them. The word is from KUON and Thayer says that some authorities define it to mean "sodomites." The word corresponding to it in the Old Testament is *keleb* which Strong defines, "A

dog; hence (by euphemism) [substitution of a milder word as being less offensive to the ear] a male prostitute." In Deuteronomy 23: 18 the word is used in that sense where it is associated with an immoral woman in designating "tainted money." The "hire of a whore" means money an immoral woman receives from her male patrons. While on that subject it was appropriate to name another immoral person and that is a man who practices unnatural immorality for money, and that is what is meant by "the price of a dog." It seems very fitting to call a Sodomite a dog, for that animal is the only creature of the brute creation that is inclined to gratify his lust on one of his own sex. And we have the same appropriateness of the two kinds of immoral characters that the Old Testament passage showed, namely, the *dogs* and very soon the *whoremongers*. The dogs are men who have immoral relations with other men, and whoremongers are men who patronize women who are immoral as an occupation.

Thayer says a *sorcerer* is "one who prepares or uses magical remedies." It is similar to those who are engaged in the "dope" business today. The scriptures tell us that medicine does good (Proverbs 17: 22), but any kind of drugs or narcotics that produce unnatural feelings of gaiety, or the opposite one of abandonment to lasciviousness, will damage the body and that will bring the curse of God upon the guilty. (1 Corinthians 6: 18-20.) The first sin committed by man against man was murder (Genesis 4: 8). That crime is so great that God finally gave the decree of capital punishment against all who commit it (Genesis 9: 6). But literal murder is not the only kind that can be committed. 1 John 3: 15 says a man who hates his brother is a murderer, and of course all such persons will be on the outside of the holy city. *Idolaters* are those who worship anything or any person besides the true God. It may be images made with hands or the works of creation such as the planets or animals, etc. Also Paul says that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3: 5), hence there will be no covetous persons in Heaven. Chapter 21: 8 shows that liars of all kinds will be cast into the lake of fire. Our verse expresses the same thought as to its comprehensiveness by taking in all who love the liars.

Verse 16. This book starts out by telling us that it is the revelation of

Jesus Christ (not of "Saint John the Divine" as the heading title erroneously states), and this verse reveals Him introducing himself directly. However, He does not overlook the services of the angel, but faithfully backs up his work by saying that He sent him. *To testify* means to transmit the testimony to the churches. That is, to bear testimony to the things that have been showed him throughout the vision of this book. *Root and offspring of David*. This means that Jesus was in the direct line of genealogy that came down from Abraham through David. That great man was not the only prominent Hebrew in the line, but there was a distinction in his case. David had two sons by the same woman, Bathsheba, and those sons were Solomon and Nathan (1 Chronicles 3: 5). At this place the blood line divides and on Solomon's side it comes down to Joseph the husband of Mary. On Nathan's side it comes down to Mary the mother of Jesus. (See Matthew 1 and Luke 3.) There is another fact that makes David of special importance. He was the first king of the Israelites from the tribe of Judah, and it had been predicted (Genesis 49: 10) that the tribe of Judah was to give law to God's people in latter times. The Mosaic law was of the tribe of Levi (Exodus 2: 1-10). David was the first king of the tribe of Judah to sit upon the throne of God's ancient people. That kingdom was destined to be set aside and replaced by another. But God assured David that his throne would not always be vacant. There was to be one of his descendants who would reign on the throne, only by that time it would be spiritual and not one with temporal government as its purpose. Such a king was worthy of coming to John with an authoritative commission such as this vision. *Bright and morning star* is what He says of himself in chapter 2: 28. The significance of this phrase is due to its brightness as it precedes the sun in rising, thus announcing that a new day is beginning. (See 2 Peter 1: 19.) And truly did the rising of Jesus come as a star to announce that a new day was about to come, the day of the Christian Dispensation.

Verse 17. The subject running through this verse is along the line of invitations. It has been stated more than once that as to the relative place of the items in the over-all vision of this book, the time of the judgment has been reached. From that stand-

point there would be no reason to give anyone an invitation to come for salvation—that opportunity has passed. Yet in reality, aside from the symbolized feature of the book, the basic purpose of the book of Revelation is to give the world a final document from Heaven as an incentive for preparing to meet the day of all days, the second coming of Christ and the judgment of the world. Otherwise there would be no point in inviting men to come and drink of the water of life. Nor would there be any call for the warning sounded in the two verses following this. Hence we shall consider the important phrases of this combined invitation. The bride is the (espoused) church (2 Corinthians 11: 2) and the Spirit is in the church (Ephesians 2: 22). The church of Christ has a standing invitation to people of the world, wishing them to accept the salvation offered so freely. In truth, it is the only organization that has any right to make such an offer (Ephesians 3: 21 and 1 Timothy 3: 15). But others as individuals have the right to repeat the invitation, hence the verse says for those who hear to repeat the call. That makes it the duty of every individual to be active in the salvation of souls. *Let him that is athirst come.* This is in line with the statement of Jesus in Matthew 5: 6 that they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. That is logical, for unless a man is thirsty he will not be interested in the opportunity to drink. *Whosoever will* signifies the same as the preceding comment, that unless a man is willing it would do him no good to go through the formality of obeying the Gospel. Let it be observed also that the blessing is to those who *come*. Man must come to the fountain for it will not be moved towards him for his convenience. The *water of life* is the same that Jesus made known to the woman of Samaria (John 4: 10-14). This water is the word of God and it will be in man “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” It is offered freely which means abundantly and without the price such as silver and gold.

Verse 18. It is asked if the phrase *this book* refers to the book of Revelation or to the whole Bible. Its direct application is to this book for it is the one that John was engaged to write. But the principle applies to the entire

word of God, for 1 Peter 4: 11 commands “any man” who speaks to do so as the oracles of God. That would not be done were he to make any change in the Sacred Text, either by adding to it or by taking from it. To *add unto these things* would not be done only by literally writing some uninspired words to the document; no person is apt to do that. But when a man assumes the privilege of practicing things not authorized in the book, he thereby adds to it in principle. The *plagues* were symbolized and were repeated in various forms. The idea is that such a man will be plagued as severely as those described.

Verse 19. There is nothing put in the book of God that is not necessary, therefore it is sinful to take any of it out. That would be done by rejecting any of its requirement. (See Hebrews 2: 2.) *Take away his part.* No man actually has possession of any part of the things in the holy city, but God has prepared a part for each person who will prepare himself for it by faithfulness to the word.

Verse 20. *He which testifieth these things* means Christ according to the statement in chapter 1: 1. *I come quickly* is also stated in verses 7 and 12 and explained in connection with those passages. The word *surely* is added at this place for the sake of emphasis. The attitude of John to that announcement is that which every faithful disciple will have. In 2 Timothy 4: 8 the apostle Paul is speaking of the crown to be given him at the coming of Christ. He says it will be for him but not for him only; it will *be unto all them also that love his appearing*. If a man is living a righteous life he will not dread to think either of death or the judgment.

Verse 21. The grace of the Lord is the favor that is bestowed upon all who are living in faithful service to Him. All can be faithful regardless of human weaknesses, hence no reason exists why anyone should be rejected when He comes. John lovingly thinks of his brethren to whom he is to commit this book and wishes for the favor of Christ to be with them. When *Amen* is used at the close of a sentence or composition, it means “so be it, may it be fulfilled.” John has no regrets about anything he has been told to write, and hence closes the great book with the sincere endorsement.







