

# **CHRIST AND TOMORROW**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

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Great Prophecies for Our Time  
This Mighty Hour  
Our Wonderful Bible  
etc.**

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## Preface

Christ and Tomorrow is intended to be a companion volume to God and the Future. The two should be read together. The former is an introduction to the study of the book of Revelation; the latter, an introduction to the book of Daniel. No one can fully appreciate Daniel without some knowledge of Revelation, and certainly no one can understand Revelation without a prior acquaintance with Daniel.

As I wrote in the preface of God and the Future, neither of these volumes is intended to be an exhaustive treatise. No attempt has been made at a verse-by-verse study. Rather, it has been my purpose to summarize and simplify the principal messages and lessons, so that the reader, coming upon these prophetic works for the first time, will be led to inquire further and seek the fuller information available in such larger volumes as Daniel and the Revelation, by Uriah Smith.

Just as a swift and brief appraisal of some glorious painting often times leads the student of art to return again and again to the masterpiece in order to examine every precious detail, so I trust the descriptive analyses provided in these pages may cause many an honest seeker after truth to open the pages of these prophetic portions of Holy Scripture. Not only with increasing frequency and delight but with the profound conviction that we are living in the most stirring days of earth's history.

As the reader will observe, I place great emphasis upon the fact that the Revelation is not John's but Christ's. It is my conviction that the realization of the truth that this remarkable document is a message from Christ to His church, gives to it an importance hitherto unappreciated by some and at the same time illuminates many a passage previously considered difficult and obscure.

Understood in this light, the book of Revelation becomes a mighty bulwark of faith, re-emphasizing, as does the book of Daniel, the fundamental truth of the sovereignty of God and the certainty of His final victory over all the powers of evil. Jesus Christ, once the suffering Savior of Calvary, here reveals Himself as King of kings and Lord of lords, assuring His faithful people that while today may seem to belong to His enemies, tomorrow shall be His, and every tomorrow throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

To study the book of Revelation is to study Christ, His knowledge of the past, His interest in the present, and His wondrous plans for the future. Let us hasten to its pages with high expectancy.

ARTHUR S. MAXWELL

# 1. Christ Lives Forever

SIXTY YEARS have passed since Christ died on Calvary, sixty years of struggle and persecution for His followers, sixty glorious, bloodstained years.

One by one the gallant little band of apostles have died a martyr's death. Beheaded or tortured to death in some fiendish way, they went to their rest boldly witnessing for their Lord. Only John is left—John the Beloved. The youngest of the first disciples, he is now an old, gray-bearded man in his eighties. Exiled from the mainland of Asia Minor “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,” the last of those who sojourned with the Man of Galilee is now a virtual prisoner on rocky Patmos in the eastern Mediterranean.

What memories surge through his mind as he sits by the shore of his island home, gazing over the restless sea! The first moment he met Jesus by the lake - could he ever forget it? Those kind, gentle eyes of the Master. His soft, loving voice. His tender, personal solicitude for the humble fishermen about Him. How good of Him to surprise them with that miraculous draught of fishes! How glad is John that at the invitation of Christ he forsook all that day and followed Him!

What happy years of companionship he had enjoyed with Jesus! What gracious words had proceeded out of His mouth! How wise had been His counsel, how wonderful His interpretation of the Scriptures! How thoughtfully He had ministered to the poor and needy! How He had gone about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with sickness or sorrow! What joy and peace He had left in people's hearts wherever He went!

What a wonderful Friend He had been! The sweetest, noblest soul who ever lived on earth. How incredible, that anyone could have been His enemy and have sought to destroy Him! Yet some had hated Him. And hated Him so much that at last they had crucified Him.

Recollections of that dreadful day pass anew through John's mind: the heartbreaking procession to Golgotha. Jesus bearing the cross. The nails being driven through His hands and feet. His gracious words: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). His kindness toward the repentant thief. His last agonized but triumphant cry, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Yes, and His last thought for His mother. He had said to John, “Behold thy mother.” It had been His last request of him—just as though He had said, “Look after mother.” And John had done so. After the crucifixion he had taken her to his home and cared for her till she passed away. Yes, he had tried his best to fulfill the trust Jesus had laid upon him.

Then there was that day, that very great day, when Jesus rose from the dead. Could he ever forget that morning when he ran with Peter to the tomb and found it empty? Or that thrilling moment when Jesus appeared to the disciples, saying, “Peace be unto you” (John 20:19)? Then it had been that the glorious, tremendous truth of the resurrection had dawned upon him in all its majesty. It had been the crowning evidence that the Son of man, as Jesus had called Himself, was also the Son of God, that the Man of Galilee was indeed the King of glory.

Then He had left them and gone away. That sad, sad day on Olivet! He could still see Jesus rising gently heavenward, higher and higher, farther and farther away, until “a cloud received him” out of sight. He could still feel the dreadful sense of loss and loneliness that had come over him at that moment. And then the upsurge of hope and courage as two men in white had appeared saying, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

That was a long time ago. Sixty years and more. And still He had not come back. Had He forgotten? Why had He delayed so long? Why had He sent no word, no message of any kind?

So much trouble had come since then. James was dead. So was Peter—crucified upside down, it was said. And Paul—he was gone too. After his marvelous conversion and outstanding ministry he had been beheaded outside the walls of Rome. Yes, one by one they had fallen—all the apostles save him—and he, a prisoner, old and weary, was ready to follow them to rest. And still Jesus had not returned.

True, there were many believers now. The sacrifice of the apostles had not been in vain. The message they had proclaimed of a redeeming and returning Christ, a risen, living Savior, had touched a multitude of hearts throughout the Roman Empire. Thousands had turned from their idols to worship Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Despite the cruelest opposition from the pagan rulers of the world, they had gladly taken their stand for Christ, witnessing for Him amid great suffering and hardship, supremely confident that He would keep His promise to come back to establish His everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Yet He had not returned. Still there was no word, no sign from heaven. Sixty years of silence. Had He not said, “If I go I will come again” (John 14:3)? Indeed He had said it, and it must be true. His prophecy regarding Jerusalem had been fulfilled. With awful thoroughness the Romans had sacked the city. The glorious

Temple had been totally demolished, so that not one stone was left upon another, just as Jesus had predicted. That was more than twenty years ago. Still He had not come. What was keeping Him? Surely there had not been a mistake, some terrible misunderstanding of His promise. Oh, for some reassurance, some word of hope for the future! Prayerfully the aged apostle lifts his eyes heavenward, longing to see Jesus in His promised glory, and yearning to hear His voice as of old.

It is the Sabbath day, "the Lord's day." He is thinking of his beloved Master, the Lord of the Sabbath. Suddenly, right behind him, he hears "a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." (Revelation 1:10, 11).

Startled, he turns to see who has spoken, and sees "seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man. . . . His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.... And out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength" (verses 12-16).

Jesus! Glorious Jesus! John recognizes Him at once, and falls at his feet as dead. To think that He was so near to him all the time! So very near! Right behind him!

The aged apostle thrills as a hand is laid upon his bowed head. It is the hand of Jesus, tender, gentle, compassionate as of old. Again he hears the voice of his beloved Master saying, "Fear not," just as long ago he had heard Him say it a thousand times to the worried and discouraged in Galilee.

"Tear not; I am the first and the last." Not you, John. You are not the last of that little band of brothers. I am. And "I am he that lived, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (verse 18).

It was as though He said: "As long as I live our cause is not lost. Death may have taken My closest friends. It may have taken thousands of My faithful followers. It may take you. But remember, John, I am alive forevermore. I have the keys of death. I shall open the graves of all who believe in Me and follow Me. The final victory shall be Mine. I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. I was there at the beginning of this great controversy with evil and I shall be there at the end. I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven, and I shall see him go down in total, everlasting defeat. Fear not. Hold fast your faith. I shall not fail you.---

What a message of cheer! Not only for John but for our hearts today. Christ lives and is alive forevermore! He who rose from the dead on that resurrection morning in the long ago is still alive now, in the twentieth century. He ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3.) And there He sits today, unchanged with the changing years, still working out His eternal purpose for the triumph of righteousness and truth, and "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Hebrews 10: 13).

Still in His possession are "the keys of hell and of death," and in His own good time He shall return, unlock the prison house of the grave, and release to everlasting life all who have trusted in Him. We must never doubt the outcome of the age long struggle between good and evil. Christ's victory is assured. He lives forever. He reigns eternally. He cannot fail.

This vision of Christ, as seen by John on Patmos, goes a long way toward making the whole book of Revelation plain. We see at once that it is not "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine," as some have described it, but in very truth "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." It is a book about Christ and tomorrow.

The faithful old apostle recognized that he was but the channel through which the revelation flowed, merely the humble instrument who recorded the words of Christ for the benefit and blessing of others. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia," he wrote: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come. And from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Revelation 1:4-7).

Thus, in his introductory words, John pointed his readers to Jesus at the hub of all his thinking, the central figure around whom all the pageantry to follow would revolve. His story would be about Him who died on Calvary and rose from the dead; who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," who is coming again in the clouds of heaven, and to whom shall be glory and dominion eternally. The Revelation would be from Him and about Him, bringing His people reassurance of His abiding love and care for them, together with counsel for their guidance and inspiration for their faith through the dark days ahead.

Seen in this light, the book of Revelation takes on new luster. Its message becomes easy to understand. Supposed difficulties of interpretation are swallowed up in the glory of the supreme revelation of Jesus Christ as the guide and counselor of His church, the ever-living Savior, the Lamb of God and Lion of Judah, the omnipotent,

omniscient, eternal King of kings and Lord of lords.

## 2. Christ Speaks to His Church

HEN CHRIST appeared to John on Patmos, it was not only for the encouragement of his lonely, beloved disciple. He had a message for His church, and He knew that John, held in such high esteem by all, would be the best one to convey it.

“What thou saw,” He said, “write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea” (Revelation 1:11).

These seven cities were actually in existence at that time, and their sites are known today. In each of them the Christian faith had taken root. Each had its little company of believers witnessing for the Savior amid an idolatrous, lascivious paganism.

Every one of these churches was dear to the heart of Christ. He pictured them as candlesticks, lighting the world of their day, and Himself as walking among them. Their leaders were as stars in His right hand, so greatly did He care for them. (Verse 20.)

Each church had its elements of strength and weakness, affording reasons for commendation or rebuke. Knowing them perfectly, Christ chose them to represent His church as a whole; so that when He wrote to them He wrote to His people in every age from John's day to the end of time.

The church of Ephesus, for instance, was typical of all faithful, zealous bodies of Christians in any period of history, but particularly of the church of the first century. “I know thy works,” said Jesus, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou cannot not bear them which are evil: . . . and has borne, and has patience, and for my name's sake has labored, and has not fainted” (Revelation 2:2,3 ).

It was a fitting word ' of appreciation for all who had struggled so manfully to establish the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire. Equally appropriate, however, was the word of rebuke: “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (verses 4,5).

Already, in John's day, the first signs of apostasy were appearing. Some who had manifested great zeal in spreading the faith were already growing indifferent.

Then Christ added the first of seven wonderful promises to the overcomer: “To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (verse 7).

In so saying, He sought to lift the thoughts of the hard-pressed believer from the struggle to the reward. He wanted to reassure all who contended with evil that, whatever the price paid in this life to maintain righteousness, purity, and goodness, it would be amply repaid in the life to come.

Next came the message to the church in Smyrna, typical of all persecuted churches and particularly of the church as a whole during the third and fourth centuries, when so many Christians suffered martyrdom for their faith.

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty,” said Jesus. “Fear none of those things which thou shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: he thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (verses 9, 10).

There is no rebuke for this church. Its sufferings are too great. Jesus has only words of sympathy for it. How comforting to know that He is aware of all the suffering, all the tribulation of His people! Most fitting was His promise to the overcomer in Smyrna: He shall not be hurt of the second death” (verse 11). He may suffer the first death, but the second shall have no power over him. His martyrdom for Christ will ensure His resurrection at the Second Advent of His Lord. His faithfulness will win for him a crown of life everlasting.

To the church in Pergamos, Christ said, “These things said he which bath the sharp sword with two edges” (verse 12)-a reference to the “sharp two edged sword” that John saw coming out of His mouth (Revelation 1:16), which undoubtedly has reference to His Word. Which is “sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

There was need for this two-edged sword in Pergamos, for false doctrines, worldliness, and fornication were being tolerated, and only the fearless preaching of the Word could eliminate them.

This was no doubt the state of affairs in the actual church of Pergamos, but it became true on a much wider scale after the conclusion of the great ten-year persecution (AD. 303-313) under the emperor Diocletian. As Christianity came into favor with succeeding emperors, and particularly with Constantine the Great (AD. 324-337), tribulation temporarily eased, and carelessness with regard to doctrine and conduct ensued-a situation that ultimately led to the full establishment of the Papacy.

Yet there were many in Pergamos who refused to yield to the worldly trend, and to encourage them in their noble stand, Jesus said, "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it." (Revelation 2:17).

There is a suggestion here of the inexhaustible resources available to the earnest Christian. Anciently there was a pot of manna hidden in the ark, under the mercy seat, close to the throne of God. No one could eat of it, of course, but it symbolized the spiritual nourishment that anyone may receive from God. As for the white stone, it has reference to several ancient customs. In some cases it was inscribed with a name. The presentation of the stone instantly ensured all the privileges of friendship and hospitality. Likewise the faithful overcomer may be assured of the eternal friendship and hospitality of Christ.

The church in Thyatira was commended for its works, charity, service, faith, and patience, but rebuked for suffering "that woman Jezebel ... to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (verse 20). As an evil woman is a Biblical symbol for an apostate church, it seems clear that in using this term Christ had in mind that long period in church history when the great apostasy, by its false teachings and persecuting spirit, well-nigh obliterated true Christianity. Throughout the Dark Ages, however, there remained a faithful few who, by their works and charity, their faith and patience, kept the torch of truth burning and passed it on to others.

"He that overcomes," said Christ to the earnest Christians of Thyatira, "to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star" (verses 26-28).

It was a promise of a future triumph. The overcomer will share Christ's victory over the powers of earth. (Psalm 2:8, 9.) Those who have suffered for Him will reign with Him. They will possess the Morning Star, which is none other than Christ Himself, even as they are possessed of Him. (Revelation 22: 16.)

To the church in Sardis, Jesus said: "I know thy works, that thou has a name that thou lives, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (Revelation 3A, 2).

This rebuke would apply to any church that has grown cold and indifferent, that takes the name of Christ-the name that lives -but though "having a form of godliness" denies "the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). In particular it refers to the spiritual anticlimax that followed the mighty spiritual upsurge of the Protestant Reformation. Throughout much of the eighteenth century, and on into the nineteenth, Protestantism lost its initial spirituality and zeal for God. Many who professed to know the truth, revealed by their lives that they were as far from it as those who still clung to the great apostasy. Religion became formal and dead. Yet there were a few, as Christ said, in whose hearts blazed the light of life. And they shall walk with Him in white.

To these overcomers He promised, "The same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5).

It was another glorious promise of future victory and eternal reward. Not only would these faithful souls be clothed with His righteousness; their names would be retained forever in the book of life. Best of all, Christ would take their names personally upon His lips, telling His Father and all the assembled angels of their faithfulness and loyalty to Him, thus ensuring them a royal welcome in the courts of glory.

Next came the message to Philadelphia, the church of brotherly love, fitting title for the Advent believers who banded themselves together from many nations and religious groups in the early part of the nineteenth century to prepare their hearts for the soon return of their Lord. Said Jesus to them, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou has a little strength, and has kept my word, and has not denied my name" (verse 8).

The open door may well have applied to the opening of the holy of holies in the heavenly sanctuary in 1844, when the great investigative judgment began (see Daniel 8:14, and its interpretation in *God and the Future*). But it could also have reference to the open door of the world, which presented itself to this little group who with little strength" sought to keep the Word of God and make it known to all mankind. With amazing faith and enterprise this small handful of believers embarked on the superhuman task of taking the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people around the globe.

But Christ had a further word for these people: "Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (verse 10).

Without doubt, this was a warning of the deepening shadows of the last days, of the coming time of trouble "such as never was" (Daniel 12:1). Precious indeed is the assurance that all who keep the word of Jesus will be kept by Him in that dread hour of trial.

And there is not long to wait. "Behold, I come quickly," said Jesus: "hold that fast which thou has, that no



man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11).

To the overcomer in this church He promised permanent tenure of heaven. “Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (verse 12).

It is a wonderful promise of complete and eternal fellowship with God. The overcoming Christian will have the name and address of his heavenly home stamped upon him, as it were. Everybody will know to whom he belongs and where he belongs. Best of all, God will acknowledge him as His own.

Last of the seven churches to receive a message from Christ was Laodicea, that phase of His church which lives in the closing years of history. Appropriately Christ announced Himself as the “Amen.” As the story of the church began with Him, so will it close with Him. He is both “author and finisher” of the faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Alas, there was no word of praise for the Laodiceans! I know thy works,” said the Master, “that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15, 16).

The trouble with this church was self-satisfaction and spiritual contentment resulting from material prosperity. “Because thou says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knew not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou may be rich; and white raiment, that thou may be clothed ...; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that thou may see” (verses 17, 18).

Thus Christ counsels His people in these last days to seek a genuine experience of His saving grace.

That they shall not be offended, and driven further into indifference, He assures them that He speaks more in sorrow than in anger. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,” He says: “be zealous therefore, and repent” (verse 19).

Then He adds this gracious invitation to fellowship: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (verse 20).

To the overcomer in Laodicea, who fights against the tide of worldliness and carelessness, and maintains his zeal for the cause of God at white heat, the promise is given: “To him . . . will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (verse 21).

This too is a promise of eternal reward. The faithful child of God today may look forward with certainty to the best that Heaven can offer, even a place beside Jesus on His throne. It is a suggestion of total victory and completely satisfying, an all-inclusive recompense.

Glancing back over Christ's messages to the seven churches, we find that one vital fact stands out: not the place or the time where each church fits into the story of the church down the ages, but rather Christ's deep personal interest in the individual member, as evidenced by His constant encouragement to the overcomer. Only individuals can overcome. It is a personal matter. One can become an overcomer only as he sets himself definitely to do the will of God and, by- daily subjection of self and daily exaltation of Christ, struggles valiantly to live like his Lord and keep himself unspotted from the world.

Blessed indeed are the overcomers. God grant that we may be found among them when the roll is called.

### 3. Christ Foretells the Future

SUDDENLY JOHN hears a voice from heaven saying to him, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter" (Revelation 4:1).

Immediately he finds himself in the presence of God amid a scene of indescribable grandeur. In the right hand of the glorious Being on the rainbow-encircled throne is a book, or scroll, written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. (Revelation 5:1.) Within it are the secrets of unborn centuries.

Presently an angel calls in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (verse 2). At first there is no answer, and John is disappointed. But soon another voice consoles him, saying, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (verse 5).

A moment later "in the midst of the throne" John sees "a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes"-fitting symbol of Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," now crowned with glory and honor, possessing fullness of power (seven horns) and fullness of wisdom (seven eyes) for the help and blessing of His people in all the earth. (Verse 6.) Deeply moving is the thought that sixty years after the crucifixion Jesus is represented as a slain lamb still pouring out His blood for the sins of men.

His sacrifice is as efficacious today, and ever shall be, as long as men need a Savior.

As Christ comes forward to take the book "out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne" (verse 7), all heaven is filled with singing. I beheld," says John, "and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne. And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." As the glorious anthem of adoration reverberates to the uttermost part of the universe, it is taken up by "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea," until John-his mind carried forward to the time of Christ's full and final triumph. He hears them singing in unison, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (verses 11-13).

It is the heavenly hallelujah chorus, praising God for the glorious plan of redemption. As it rolls on from star to star and planet to planet throughout God's infinite domain, every living creature is reminded anew that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

As John listens entranced, he is the more impressed with the importance of the seven-sealed scroll. If only the slain Lamb may open it, He whose infinite sacrifice has called forth this mighty paean of praise, how supremely significant must be its contents!

As Christ opens the first seal a voice calls to John, "Come and see." The aged apostle looks, and "behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Revelation 6:2).

It is a picture of the apostolic church, pure in faith, doctrine, and character, exalting Christ as its leader, shooting the arrows of truth into the hearts of men, and riding forth zealously and courageously to conquer the world for its Lord. Thus might the church have been in every age till its work was done. Alas, it temporized with the world and lost both its vision and its way.

As Christ opens the second seal John is startled to see that the horse has changed color. It is red, and its rider acts ferociously. "Power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (verse 4).

The period of pristine purity is past. Worldliness has crept into the church. It is torn with controversies. Its councils are scenes of commotion. It unites with the civil power and gladly grasps the sword of state authority. The symbolism presents a perfect picture of the church once it secured the favor of the emperors.

"And when he had opened the third seal," said John, I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." Then he heard a voice say, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine" (verses 5, 6).

Can this also represent the church? It does. It has changed color again, going into deeper sin. It has become the exact opposite of whiteness and purity. It has absorbed so many false doctrines and gross superstitions that it is scarcely recognizable as the church of Christ. During the period following Constantine's conversion, the historian Mosheim says there "arose that extravagant veneration for departed saints. . . . also the celibacy of priests, the worship of images and relics, which in process of time almost utterly destroyed the Christian religion. . . . An

enormous train of different superstitions were gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety.” - An Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1, P. 364.

The balances in the hand of the rider on the black horse, and the reference to the price of wheat and barley, may suggest the growing materialism of the church, particularly the practice of bartering spiritual services for money, which later became one of its most conspicuous faults.

As Christ opens the fourth seal, and with heavy heart permits His faithful servant to glimpse the next stage in the degeneracy of the organization bearing His name, John sees “a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (verse 8).

Can it be possible that this too portrays the church? Yes, indeed. Not the true saints of God, of course, but a body that claims to be the church. And what more fitting picture could have been drawn “of that mighty ecclesiastical institution, which for a thousand years and more dominated Europe, crushing all opposition with the fiercest persecution? Historians claim that during the dreadful days of papal supremacy fifty million people were put to death. Existing records of the Waldenses and the Huguenots, also the history of the Inquisition and the Counter Reformation, provide incontrovertible evidence of the carnage wrought by this so-called church of Christ. No wonder the horse John saw was “pale” or, as the original suggests, greenish yellow. It had the color of death, and Death rode upon it. Apostasy could go no further.

As Christ opens the fifth seal, He permits John to glimpse His true saints who would suffer under the terrible persecutions of the Dark Ages. The apostle says: “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, does thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” (verses 9-11).

This is figurative language, of course. There are no disembodied “souls” lurking under altars, for the dead rest unconscious in the grave until the resurrection. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; John 5:28, 29.) However, there is a very real sense in which the dead cry out for justice, even as the blood of Abel cried from the ground. (Genesis 4:9, 10.) So the multitudes slain by the apostate church of the Dark Ages constitute a tremendous appeal to Christ to come to their rescue. No doubt many of them, while living, actually cried out, in the anguish of their souls, “How long, O Lord, how long?”

The “souls” were given white robes. Obviously this language is also figurative, suggesting the change of attitude toward the martyred saints after the Reformation. They were hunted down and put to death as heretics and traitors, but in due time the true value of their sacrifice became recognized. All over Europe monuments were erected to these noble heroes of the cross.

As Christ opens the sixth seal there is a sudden change in the sequence of things to come. In place of symbolic horses, altars, and souls John sees a succession of tremendous upheavals in heaven and earth, as if God were answering the plaintive, challenging cry, “How long, O Lord, how long?” by a stupendous revelation of His power. Says John: “There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains. . . . hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:12-17).

If commentators are right in their assumption that the first five seals cover the course of church history from Pentecost to the post Reformation period, immense significance attaches to the fact that in the eighteenth century there occurred one of the greatest earthquakes of all time. On November 1, 1755, Lisbon, capital of Portugal, was destroyed, and four million square miles of the earth's surface were severely shaken, this violent agitation causing tidal waves and other disturbances in three continents.

Shortly thereafter came the mysterious Dark Day of May 19, 1780. Whittier describes the event in his poem “Abraham Davenport.”

Then, on November 13, 1833, the stars fell from heaven. Not the fixed stars, of course, but “shooting stars.” On that night there occurred the greatest shower of meteors in all recorded history. “The whole firmament, over all the United States” was for hours says R. M. Devens, “in fiery commotion! No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class of the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another.... During the three hours of its continuance, the day of judgment was believed to be only waiting for sunrise.” - Great Events of Our Past Century, pp. 228, 229.

After the falling of the stars, says Christ, heaven will depart as a scroll when it is rolled together," a suggestion of finality and the end of the world. Today we are living between the two events. The great earthquake of Lisbon, the darkening of the sun, the appearance of the moon as blood, and the falling of the stars have been harbingers of the approach of this -great day of his wrath." How distant it is, none can tell, for no man knows the day or the hour of Christ's return. Yet it cannot be long delayed. To the cry, "How long, O Lord?" He replies, "Behold, I come quickly."

Soon Jesus will be seen "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The hosts of heaven are marshaled to follow Him down the skies to the rescue of His own. God grant that when He shall appear we may look up with joyful hearts, saying, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us" (Isaiah 25:9).

## 4. Christ Seals His people

SOMETIME BEFORE the end of the world, and before the opening of the seventh seal, Christ will bring His people the remnant of His church-into a most intimate relationship to Himself. Perhaps it will be because of the fact that they are His remnant, the last to champion His cause in the closing years of time. Perhaps it will be because of the tremendous burden of responsibility that will rest upon them as His witnesses to a doomed and dying world; but whatever the reason, there is no doubt that it is His plan to bind them very close to Himself with cords that can never be broken.

Says John:

“After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Revelation 7:1-3).

The number sealed is given as 144,000, and of these it is said that they will stand “before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes- (verses 15-17).

Touching indeed is the thought that “the Lamb shall feed them.” He who is the central figure in the divine plan of redemption, before whom ten thousand times ten thousand angels bow in reverent adoration, whose sublime sacrifice calls forth the universal anthem, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain”-He shall feed this chosen company. He will lead them to the living fountains of waters.”

No wonder John wanted to know, Who are these and whence came they? And well may we ask, How does it happen that this privileged remnant is “sealed” to become as it were Christ's special bodyguard throughout the ages to come?

One thing is certain: Whoever belongs to this company will have to be outstanding among the Christians not only of his own day but of all time. Like Saul of old, they will have to be head and shoulders above all their fellows in every Christian grace, service, and sacrifice. Otherwise, in all fairness to the multitudes who have loved and served Him, Christ could not bestow upon them so great an honor.

The time of the sealing is significant. It happens, as already suggested, just before the end; that is, sometime between the falling of the stars in 1833 and that climactic day when heaven shall depart “as a scroll when it is rolled together.”

It is to take place while the last great storm of trouble is gathering, while the angels are holding the winds of strife-a clear indication that those who are sealed will be called upon to stand true to Christ under pressures unknown to any previous generation. They will have to bear their witness for their Lord facing the full fury of Satan as he tries for the last time to corrupt and stamp out the church. (Revelation 12:17.)

The place of the sealing is important. It is “in their foreheads.” One would hardly suppose it to be a literal symbol, like a tattoo, but rather an impression upon the mind and heart, which is more in accordance with God's methods. Just as a change of heart is revealed by a change of countenance, so the sealing of the remnant will become evident by the holy joy on their faces and the piety and rectitude of their lives.

As to the method of sealing, nothing is said, but the apostle Paul makes a most helpful suggestion. Members of the Ephesus church, he said, were “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). In the same epistle he counseled them, “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

That is how believers were sealed in the first century, and it is the only way they will be sealed in the last. No sealing without the Holy Spirit would be of any value; indeed, any material, mechanical, legalistic sealing would be entirely ineffectual and worthless. It is by the Holy Spirit that a man is born again (John 3:5), and by the Holy Spirit that he is preserved as a child of God “unto the day of redemption.”

We can take it for granted that Christ will introduce no new method of sealing so far as the 144,000 are concerned. His only means of working upon human hearts and giving men and women the spiritual strength they need for any experience is by the Holy Spirit. (John 14:16,17.) Complete identity of thought and purpose between a Christian and his Lord, which is the secret, and the outworking of sealing, is accomplished by this means, and this means alone. Father and Son must take full possession of him by the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, “If a man love me,

he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” A person can be completely sealed only as he enjoys perfect fellowship with God.

For a full understanding of Christ's purpose in this matter, we must remember the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples- (Isaiah 8:16). The man or woman who is sealed by the Holy Spirit will naturally desire to keep God's law in its entirety. The Ten Commandments will be sealed in his heart.

All God's words will be precious to him, and he will want to say as sincerely and as eagerly as did Jesus, “I delight to do thy will, O my God- (Psalm 40:8).

In harmony with this we read in Exodus 31:13 that the Sabbath is a sign, or seal, of God's people: “Verily my Sabbaths you shall keep. For it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord that does sanctify you.” (See Ezekiel 20:12, 20.)

The commandment to observe the seventh-day Sabbath is one of God's great moral precepts; and the truly converted person, who desires that his whole life shall be directed by the Holy Spirit, will have no question in his mind about keeping God's holy day. Its observance by him will be, in fact, one of the evidences-and a most obvious, visible evidence that the sealing work of the Holy Spirit is taking place in his heart.

From all of which it becomes clear that in the closing years of time our Lord Jesus Christ, by the working of His Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men and women, will cause to appear upon the earth a noble, godly people, thinking God's thoughts and doing God's works. A people completely identified with Him in all purposes and objectives, who live in full harmony with His expressed will, and who perfectly represent Him before the last generation of men.

As a result of the experiences through which they pass, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they will become so like their Master that it will be said of them that “in their mouth was found no guile. For they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:5). The Father will gladly claim them as His own, for His name is “written in their foreheads” (verse 1). Identity is complete. His character is theirs. They have become so like Jesus that God Himself can see no flaws in their character.

Such indeed will be the sealed people of these latter days. A Christ-honoring people, a law-abiding people, a Sabbath keeping people, a loving, gracious, friendly, self -sacrificing people. And when the Lord looks upon them in tender love and joyous satisfaction, He will say, “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” (verse 12).

## 5. Christ the Coming Conqueror

HAVING REVEALED to John the course of church history from the first century, through the great apostasy, to the final sealing of the loyal remnant and His return in glorious majesty, Christ proceeds to unveil the future of nations from John's day till the end of time.

A prisoner of Rome, having throughout his long life witnessed much of its pomp, power, and cruelty, the aged apostle is naturally concerned with what will happen to it in years to come. From his study of the book of Daniel and the prophetic outline of the four universal kingdoms contained therein, he knows that someday it must come to an end. But how? What forces will operate to bring about its overthrow and its division into the ten kingdoms of Daniel 7:24?

With the Roman Empire almost at the zenith of its power, its seemingly unconquerable legions in complete control of all the vast territory from Egypt to England, from Spain to the north of Germany, it must have been hard for John to see how this mighty concentration of human might could ever be overthrown. Somehow, someday, it must pass away and give place to the kingdom of his Lord, but how would it happen? And when?

Suddenly, gazing into heaven, John sees seven angels standing before God. Seven trumpets are handed to them, so that they appear like seven heralds of things to come. What happened next is described in Revelation 8:7 to 11:15.

“The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.” (Revelation 8:7).

It is a terrifying picture, but nevertheless a most fitting portrayal of the invasion of Roman territory by the Goths under their merciless leader Alaric. This took place about the end of the fourth century after Christ, three hundred years after Christ told John it would happen.

Twice Alaric crossed the frontiers of the empire, the first time ravaging Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece, and the second time crossing the Alps and the Apennines and storming the Eternal City itself.---Hail,- “fire,” and “blood” accurately symbolize the ravages of his followed as they swept over all of Italy and much of Gaul.

“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: ... and the third part of the ships were destroyed” (verses 8, 9).

Following rapidly upon the heels of Alaric came the terrible Genseric, king of the Vandals. He made his capital in Carthage in North Africa and, having created a powerful fleet, sailed the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, leaving death and destruction in his wake. Christ's forecast indicated that his conquests would be naval, and such indeed they were. During the greater part of the fifth century Genseric triumphed over the waning power of Rome, and in his onslaughts on her fleet and naval bases was indeed “as it were a great mountain burning with fire . . . cast into the sea.”

“And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood” (verses 10,11).

Even while Genseric was fighting against Rome upon the sea, Attila, with his hordes of Huns, was storming the empire from the north. Remarkably enough, his principal operations were in the neighborhood of the Alps, “the fountains of waters” from which many a river is supplied; and wherever he and his followers proceeded they left nothing behind but ruin and devastation. In AD 451 he sacked most of the cities of Gaul, and the following year treated the cities at the head of the Adriatic in similar drastic fashion, thereafter plundering and murdering through all western Lombardy. A contemporary has left on record the fact that “he walked with a proud step, darting a haughty glance this way and that as if he felt himself lord of all,” and it was his boast that “the grass never grew on the spot which his horse had trod.” No wonder Christ designated him “Wormwood,” suggestive of the bitterness and misery that the very mention of his name would inspire among men.

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars. So as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise” (verse 12).

Now upon the scene of destruction and desolation appears Odoacer, king of the Heruli, who with his hordes accomplished the final overthrow of the Roman Empire of the West in AD 476. The strange reference to the sun, moon, and stars suggests the passing of the various phases of the Roman Government. As Elliott says: “The senate sent away the imperial insignia to Constantinople, professing to the emperor of the East that one emperor was sufficient for the whole of the empire. Thus of the Roman imperial sun, that third which appertained to the Western Empire was eclipsed, and shone no more.”-E. B. ELLIOTT, *Horae Apocalypticae*, vol. 1, p. 355.

Again quoting from the same source: "She saw her glories star by star expire,' till not even a single star remained, to glimmer on the vacant and dark night." - Page 356.

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." (Revelation 9:1,2).

Here and in the following ten verses the aged apostle was carried forward another two hundred years to the next spectacular period of conquest when, like smoke out of a bottomless pit, the fanatical followers of the mighty Mohammed swarmed out of the wild, desolate fastnesses of Arabia, carrying fire and sword through North Africa, Palestine, and parts of Asia Minor. Their leader, according to verse 11, was to be known as Abaddon, or Apollyon, meaning "Destroyer"; and certainly no one ever so well deserved this title as the conquering prophet of Allah and his successors. However, as the word "king" is employed, the title may apply particularly to Othman, who, in the thirteenth century, founded the powerful Ottoman Empire.

It is of special interest to note at this point the reference in the fifth verse of this chapter to a prophetic time period of five months, or 150 days, which on the Biblical basis of a day for a year, represents 150 years.

If, as many commentators agree, this period was designed to begin when Othman directed his first assault upon the Greek Empire, which was coincident with the beginning of Ottoman power, that date would be, according to the historian Edward Gibbon, July 27, 1299. (See *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 6, chap. 64, par. 14.)

Adding 150 years to 1299 would carry the story down to 1449, when the next epochal change was to take place, according to the symbolism of the sixth trumpet.

"And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men" (verses 13-15).

As the Ottoman Empire by this time covered the whole territory watered by the river Euphrates, it is clear that it was the sudden expansion of this power that was now brought to view. After having been under a certain measure of restraint for 150 years, it was released for further conquests. So in vision John may well have seen the virtual surrendering of national independence by the Greeks in 1449, when the new emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire would not venture to ascend his throne without seeking the consent of Amurath II, the Turkish sultan. John may well have seen also the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, followed by their conquering career through central Europe to the gates of Vienna. Certainly he noted one important reason for the swift Turkish successes-the use of firearms, with -fire and smoke and brimstone- seeming to come out of the heads of their horses when the warriors fired their guns as they rode into battle. He recorded also how long this cruel and despotic power would continue, narrowing the period of its aggressiveness down to exactly 391 years and 15 days.\*

Adding this period of 391 years and 15 days to July 27, 1449, carries us down to August 11, 1840, on which day the government of the once mighty Ottoman Empire surrendered its independence to the four great powers: England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia.

***\*Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 help to establish the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation. The prophetic -year- mentioned in this verse. represents 360 literal years; a prophetic "month," or 30 days, equals 30 literal years; one day equals one literal year; one "hour," the twenty-fourth part of a day, represents one twenty-fourth of a literal year, or 15 days. Thus the total is 391 years and 15 days.***

It is interesting to recall in this connection that, two years before this happened, in 1838, Josiah Litch, a student of prophecy, announced from his calculations, based on the time periods of the fifth and sixth trumpets, that Turkish independence would cease sometime in the month of August, 1840. A few days before the end of the prophetic period he settled on August 11. As the day approached thousands watched to see whether his interpretation would prove correct.

All this time a war had been raging between the Turkish sultan and Mehernet Ali, pasha of Egypt, with the pasha enjoying such success that the four powers mentioned previously became alarmed lest he take the sultan's throne, a development they did not wish. So a conference of the powers was held in London-with an Ottoman representative present-at which it was agreed that the sultan should offer terms of settlement to the pasha, on the understanding that, should the pasha decline them, the four powers would take the matter into their hands. The ultimatum was duly sent, and reached Alexandria on August 11, 1840.\* By seeking and accepting the assistance of the four powers, the sultan openly acknowledged his dependence upon them. It was a pitiful end to the might of the Ottoman conquerors.



The exact fulfillment of the prophecy to the very day caused a great sensation at the time, and incidentally provided a mighty impetus to the Advent Movement, which was already attracting widespread attention.

But now we come to the most astounding feature of this amazing presentation of “things that are to come hereafter.”

Turning to the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation, we read:

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and was, and art to come. Because thou has taken to thee thy great power, and has reigned” (verses 15-17).

Thus the prophet, after looking across more than seventeen centuries of conflict and turmoil, after watching conqueror after conqueror sweep on his devastating course across the blood-soaked earth, suddenly becomes aware of Heaven's profound concern in all this dreadful sequence of tragedies. Like Daniel, he realizes anew that “the most High rules in the kingdom of men.” He sees that God is still in control, still guiding human destiny. With deep relief he learns that soon all this horror will be brought to a close, and Christ will take to Himself His own power, and reign.

*\* For exhaustive testimony confirming this date, see Uriah Smith, Daniel and the Revelation.*

Remembering that the sixth trumpet ceased to sound in 1840, let us consider the enormous significance of the verse that follows:

“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou should give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great. And should destroy them which destroy the earth” (verse 18).

“The nations were angry.” Only Christ could have so perfectly summarized, in advance, and in four short words, the history of the past hundred years. Looking down the ages, He saw that strife among the nations would be the predominant feature of our time. How true it has proved to be! From the great revolution that swept Europe in 1848, through the Crimean War and the Franco-Prussian War and the Boer War, until the smoldering fires of international hatred burst forth in the world war of 1914-18, there is observable a mounting fury that has perfectly fulfilled this amazing prophecy. And what shall we say of the years that have elapsed since then; of the systematic inculcation of hatred practiced by certain great powers on a scale never before contemplated; of the ferocity of the fighting as war broke out again and spread abroad to embrace every continent, every ocean, every island, around the globe; of the multiplied horrors of modern, scientific warfare; of the barbarism and cruelty inflicted upon innocent millions by heartless, hate-filled enemies? What more accurate description of it all could there be than those four expressive words: “The nations were angry”?

That we are living “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel,” there can be no question. And before this voice ceases, the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all who are in rebellion against Him; while those who destroy the earth shall themselves be brought to destruction.

At this time also “the mystery of God” shall be finished. (Revelation 10:7; Ephesians 1:9, 10.) The blessed gospel of redeeming love shall be carried to earth's remotest bounds and shall be crowned by that glorious event when God shall give reward to His “servants the prophets, and to the saints,” and to them that fear His name, “small and great.” Thus the day of the vindication of the righteous is near at hand, and the humblest child of God may take fresh courage and look with renewed confidence toward the promised deliverance that cannot now be long delayed.

Surely we have here one of the greatest predictions in all the Bible, radiant with cheer and encouragement for the followers of Christ in these latter days. Conquerors may come and conquerors may go, but not one of them can change the plans or deflect the purposes of the Almighty. They may work havoc in the earth; they may perpetrate the most fearful atrocities upon their fellow men; but God bides His time, keeping record of every act of cruelty and oppression until the day of judgment.

But when all battles are over, and all fighting has ceased; when all who have striven so desperately for world dominion have been forgotten. When all their ambitious plans have gone to pieces, and all their blatant boastings have been silenced; then “the kingdoms of this world” shall “become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever.”

“And he shall reign”—not Alaric or Genseric, not Attila or Odoacer, not Mohammed or Othman, not Charlemagne or Charles V or Louis XIV or Napoleon-no; not one of them, but Christ! Already they, for the most part, have joined the legion of forgotten men, forgotten conquerors, indeed! But Christ, the Lamb of God, the suffering Savior who gave Himself for lost mankind. Who came from heaven to earth “not to be ministered unto, but

to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Who came not “to destroy men's lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:56); who came to help, to heal, to serve, to love-yea, “he shall reign for ever and ever.”

“The Lamb shall overcome” (Revelation 17:14). There can never be the least doubt about that. His final victory is beyond question. He is the coming conqueror. And because of this unalterable fact the voice of prophecy, full of glorious confidence, cries out across the centuries to every wavering, trembling heart: “Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you” (Isaiah 35:3, 4).

## 6. Christ Warns of Trouble Ahead

AVING PERMITTED John to glimpse some of “the things which must be hereafter” through the symbolism of the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets, Christ opens before him one of the deep mysteries of the universe—the age long controversy between Satan and Himself and its dire consequences for the world and the church.

John learns the terrible truth that there was once “war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him- (Revelation 12:7-9).

It is hard to think of war in heaven, or to associate the gentle Prince of Peace with conflict, but conflict there was. Exactly when it began, or what was its nature, is not made clear, but from the prophet Isaiah we learn something of its origin. “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” says the inspired prophet. “For thou has said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most High.” (Isaiah 14:12-14).

From the prophet Ezekiel we learn that Lucifer was “the anointed cherub that covers,” a suggestion of the exalted position he occupied near the throne of God. “Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezekiel 28:14,15).

This identifies the fountainhead of sin, the source of the great rebellion against the government of God. All evil is traceable to that first thought of pride in Lucifer's heart. Says the prophet, “Your heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (verse 17). Coveting the honor that the Father had bestowed upon His Son, Lucifer aspired to power that it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield. Jealousy fed the flames of discontent until dissatisfaction became open discord. Beautiful Lucifer became hate-filled Satan. Ultimately it became necessary for him to be expelled from heaven, together with all the angels whom he had deceived by his false charges against God.

It was that awful moment of divine displeasure and Lucifer's disgrace that Christ recalled when He said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18).

Unfortunately this was not the end of the controversy, but merely its transference from heaven to earth. Once on this planet, Satan succeeded in corrupting the sinless pair in Eden, and subsequently leading their offspring into such hideous depths of sin that it became necessary for God to send the Flood to destroy all save Noah and his family. Thereafter the battle was renewed, culminating in Satan's personal attack upon Christ when He came to earth for man's redemption, portrayed before John in the striking symbolism of Revelation 12:1-5.

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

Glowing in the light of the Christian message and standing upon the reflected light of the Mosaic dispensation, the woman clearly represents the true church of God, the twelve stars on her head standing for the twelve apostles. Obviously the Man-child is Christ.

As for the “great red dragon,” this must represent the power that sought to devour the Child when He was born, which was pagan Rome acting on behalf of, and inspired by, “the great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan.” The horns and crowns of the great red dragon may well represent the sum total of all earthly powers that have manifested the cruel, jealous, hateful spirit of the dragon against Jesus and His followers.

The Man-child was “caught up unto God, and to his throne”—a singularly brief but accurate epitome of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Left alone, “the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (verse 6).

Here Christ begins to reveal to John the extent of the suffering His church must expect before its final

deliverance. It will be forced to flee before its persecutors. Driven from the large centers of population, it will seek refuge in out-of-the-way places, finding sustenance in far-off oases and hidden valleys of the mountains. Never, however, will it be forgotten. Christ will see that it is “nourished” (verse 14) and so preserved from extinction.

For 1260 days, or prophetic years, this time of trouble was to continue, an amazing prediction of the persecution through which the true church of Christ passed during the Dark Ages.

Incidentally, the time period mentioned here affords a priceless key to the meaning of the phrase, “time and times and the dividing of time” mentioned in Daniel 7:25. It becomes clear that a “time” is one year, or 360 days; two “times” are two years, or 720 days; and “half a time” is half a year, or 180 days, making a total of 1260 symbolic days or literal years. This period lasted from AD 538 till 1798, during which time more than fifty million people perished in the cruel massacres of the Albigenses, Waldenses, Huguenots, and others who sought to follow the simple teachings of the Bible in their worship of God.

The intensity of Satan's hatred and his eagerness for the extirpation of all true followers of Christ are indicated in the words: “The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (Revelation 12:15). This could refer to the flood of false, vindictive, propaganda, which was so often directed against the children of God, coupled with the fierce, cruel persecution that it aroused.

“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth- (verse 16).

In these words some relief is promised to the suffering saints. And so it came to pass. With the beginning of the great Reformation came the dawn of religious liberty. Widespread reading of the Bible led multitudes to see how they had been deceived by the sophistries and superstitions of the great apostasy. Enlightened kings and princes espoused the cause of freedom, and soon there was a wide area of the earth whither persecuted Christians could flee and find sanctuary. During the same period America was discovered and became the haven of multitudes who sought to escape from the religious tyranny that has soaked Europe with blood for so many centuries.

Alas, this relief to the church was to be temporary. According to Christ's revelation to John, persecution would be renewed before the end.

As the apostle watches the symbolic portrayal of the future, he notes that “the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (verse 17).

The very word “remnant” suggests that this passage has reference to the final phase of the church's experience. It is apparent also that this remnant is composed of the very people who, as the climax of their spiritual experience, receive the seal of God's approval for their noble, self-sacrificing, commandment-keeping witness for Christ. Undoubtedly it is because of their earnest desire to identify themselves with Christ, and accomplish the work of Christ, that they bring upon themselves the full fury of Satan. If he cannot destroy Christ, at least he will try to destroy those who seek to serve and exemplify Him before the last generation of men.

How will he attempt this murderous assault? What earthly power will he inspire with the spirit of the dragon to accomplish this wicked purpose?

Christ answers the questions as He continues to present the thing to come hereafter.

Before the apostle's astonished gaze there now passes a strange and terrifying creature “having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (Revelation 13:1).

Furthermore, it is “like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (verse 2).

The last clause offers a strong clue to the identity of the power here symbolized. The dragon gave him his seat. In this instance the dragon is the same as the one mentioned in Revelation 12:4, which sought to destroy the Man-child when He was born; in other words, pagan Rome. To which power did pagan Rome give its seat? History's answer is plain. When the Roman Empire passed away its place was taken by that great religious hierarchy that dominated the world for the next twelve centuries.

That this interpretation is correct becomes clearer as one considers the rest of John's vision concerning this power. “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” (Revelation 13:5-7).

The similarity between this description and that of the little horn power of Daniel 7:25 is so exact as to be unmistakable. If that power, as most commentators agree, refers to papal Rome, so must this; and how perfectly does every phase of the symbolism delineate its tyrannical, persecuting career throughout the long period of its dominance of the nations! Lest there be any doubt, even the identical time period mentioned in Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:14 is included in the description; only in this case the 1260 days are spoken of as “forty and two

months.”

One further identifying mark is mentioned by John: “I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.” (Revelation 13:3).

Wounded to death but rising again-how exactly does this depict the history of the Papacy from 1798 until the present day! When in August, 1799, Pope Pius VI passed away, a captive of France, “half Europe thought ... that with the Pope the Papacy was dead.” -JOSEPH RICKABY, S.J., *The Modern Papacy*, p. 1.

But today, as the bishop of Omaha once said, “the place of the Papacy in world affairs seems to stand out in bolder relief than at almost any other epoch.”

Despite all the setbacks this power has received in recent years in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and Mexico, its influence is still very great. One need but recall the number of nations now represented at the Vatican, to realize that the deadly wound received in 1798 is healed, and that this great religion-political organization is ready to play its predicted role in the closing scenes of history.

But why does Christ speak of this power in this connection? Because He is warning of trouble ahead, of the tragedies and afflictions that will befall His faithful followers and the sources whence their persecution will come. As He uncovers Satan's wicked designs He reveals that there will be three outstanding persecutors: first, the great red dragon, or pagan Rome; second, the leopard beast, or papal Rome; and third, a strange two-horned beast that John now sees coming up out of the earth” (verse 11).

As John views this latter remarkable creature he records that it has “two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.”

“And he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast. Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed” (verses 12-15).

What power can this be that, despite its peaceful appearance, finally aligns itself with the leopard beast and adopts its dragon like persecuting tactics against the true children of God? Note well the details of this striking prophetic symbol.

First, this new “beast,” or nation, or power, comes into the picture as the other goes into captivity.

Second, unlike the other beast, and in fact unlike all the symbolic beasts mentioned in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel, this one comes up out of the earth. Now, “seas” stand for -peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” (Revelation 17:15), so that by contrast “the earth” would seem to imply a more or less uninhabited region.

Third, this beast has two horns “like a lamb,” suggesting the peacefulness and harmlessness of its principles and conduct, at least in the early stages of its development.

Fourth, and presumably after the lapse of time, “he spoke as a dragon.”

The question arises: What power was quietly and unobtrusively rising out of obscurity about the close of the eighteenth century when the Papacy was going into decline, and finally into captivity? What power at that time was rising “out of the earth,” in a land which, unlike overcrowded Europe, was sparsely peopled and largely a wilderness? What nation, rising in such a place and under such circumstances, based its constitution, and therefore its future power and influence, upon two such lamb like principles as civil and religious liberty?

There is only one nation whose history fits the prophetic outline -the United States of America.

It would be superfluous to rehearse here the unique and amazing story of this country's entrance into the family of nations, for everyone instantly recalls the voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers, the War of Independence, the drafting of the Constitution, the acquisition of new territories, the ever-flowing tide of immigration, the opening up of the West, and the final unification of the nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

What was the secret of this rapid growth and expansion? It was the fundamental principle of freedom-freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion. This gave the whole nation the gentle characteristics of a lamb, so different from those of the ravenous monsters used to typify the war-torn peoples of Europe. This too was the reason why multitudes from every nation under heaven flocked to this land of new hope and opportunity. Here they came to be free to live and work in safety, secure from age-old tyrannies. Here they came to worship as they pleased, unshackled by the conventions and restrictions that bound them in the land of their birth.

Thus, under the providence of God, in little more than a century and a half this nation grew to maturity, mightily increased in population, possessions, prestige, and power. And still, thank God, it retains its lamb like

characteristics. It proclaims tolerance for all peoples and all religions, and stands ready to preserve the cherished liberties that made it great.

And yet, according to this prophecy we are considering, a change is to take place. The lamb like nation is to speak as a dragon.

Can it be possible that any such change will ever take place in the history of the United States? It is not only possible; it is already in process. The world-shaking upheavals of the past few years have gone far to prepare the way for the transformation indicated in this amazing prediction.

Many thinking people have become convinced that a destiny far beyond anything conceived by the founding fathers awaits this nation in the immediate future.

Long before America entered the second world war, the editor of a nationally known newspaper declared: "All signs point to a greater role for the United States in world affairs."

Discussing the suggestion that America might "run away with the prize of world dominion," the foreign editor of the San Francisco Chronicle remarked that some have expressed the conviction that the situation is developing in a direction to launch America into a career of triumphant imperialism."

The prophecy would seem to suggest that there will be no bid for world supremacy on the part of this nation such as actuated the great empires of the past. It will not seek dominion for dominion's sake. It will not seek merely military victories, nor desire any sort of military dictatorship. Instead it will turn its mind toward religion, possibly as a remedy for the world's ills—a way of escape from its everlasting dissensions and disorders. However, it will not be the religion of its pioneers and Pilgrim Fathers, but the very religion they forsook!

According to the prophecy, "he exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:12).

Now "the first beast," as we have seen, is that religion-political system known throughout history as the Papacy, which grew up among the ruins of the old pagan Roman Empire. Without doubt this is the beast, or power, whose deadly wound was healed. And the lamb like beast, when it is come to full strength, is to use its influence to persuade the peoples of earth "to worship the first beast."

This does not mean, of course, that every American is going to become a convert to Rome! Of course not. But it suggests that the doctrines, practices, and ideals of the Papacy will find increasing favor in both church and government circles. It implies that Protestantism will gradually lose its "protest" and become ever more tolerant of the beliefs it once taught were error.

Are there any indications as yet that any such lamentable development might take place? Though still vague and shadowy, they are surely taking shape. One recalls the rapid growth of Roman Catholicism in this country, its powerful influence in political affairs, and the agitation for the appointment of a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

Furthermore, no one who has followed religious trends for the past few years can have failed to note the increasing demand on the part of many religious leaders for a closer union, not only of the various Protestant bodies but also of Protestants and Catholics.

Many Christians who deplore the divided state of Christendom feel an imperative urge to achieve unity at all costs; but let them beware of the aftermath. They may discover that, having achieved a superficial unity, and having clothed it, perchance, with state authority, they have succeeded only in creating an organization so like the original Papacy that people will say that it is the very "image" of it.

This peril is indicated in the prophecy under consideration, where we read that, when America has grown to full power, "an image to the beast" will actually be established (verse 14).

Protestants who are not prepared to surrender their convictions, or the fundamentals of their faith, will do well to watch these development with great care. Present trends, even in this "the land of the free and the home of the brave," could lead easily into a period of intolerance toward those who refuse to cooperate.

Note well the ominous prediction that this power ultimately will cause "that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (verses 15-17).

Clearly there is trouble ahead. All who love Christ and are determined to stand loyally by Him in the closing crisis of the ages may expect to feel the fury of Satan's hatred.

Yet they need not fear the outcome. Christ knows what is coming, and He will ever be near to comfort and succor His people.

This startling prediction in the latter part of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation belongs to the closing events of history. That we can now see its fulfillment coming to pass is but another indication that we are living close to that sublime event when the Lord Jesus shall return in glory, and "the kingdoms of this world" shall become

“the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

## 7. Christ's' Last Message to Men

HAVING REVEALED to His faithful servant, the apostle John, the trouble ahead for His followers, and having named the dragon-inspired powers primarily responsible for their persecution, Christ begins to unveil His plan for bringing the centuries of conflict and suffering to a close.

Suddenly the scene changes, and John sees an angel flying “in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).

After his vision of the great red dragon, the hideous leopard beast, and the two-horned creature that spoke-and acted-like a dragon, this must have been a most welcome sight. An angel bearing the “everlasting gospel” to all mankind was indeed in striking contrast to the evil, persecuting powers he had just witnessed dominating the nations of the world.

As John watches enthralled, he hears this glorious being cry with a loud voice, “Tear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (verse 7).

The time when this message was to be given to the world is made clear by the reference to “the hour of his judgment.” This could only apply after the close of the 2300-year time period of Daniel 8:14, which, as pointed out in *God and the Future*, ended in 1844 with the beginning of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. Then it was that “the judgment was set, and the books were opened,” as pictured in Daniel 7:10. Then it was that the great investigation began in the courts of glory to determine who among the children of men shall become citizens of God's eternal kingdom. Not that God Himself needs to augment His knowledge of any individual case, but in order that, when final rewards and punishments are given, the whole universe shall be compelled to admit that the judgments of God are “true and righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:9).

It is of the highest significance that in 1844, exactly at the time predicted, a body of people began to proclaim the very message of the angel of Revelation 14:6. This small group formed the nucleus of the great Second Advent Movement, which has since gone into all the world proclaiming in a “loud” voice-by radio, television, pulpit, and printing press-the truly tremendous tidings: “The hour of his judgment is come.”

Together with this message, it has carried the urgent appeal to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” to “worship him that made heaven, and earth.” With great earnestness and zeal it has called upon men and women everywhere to return to God, confess their sins, and give their hearts to Him before it is everlastingly too late.

Everywhere in its onward march to the ends of the earth this Advent Movement has sought to uplift Christ as Creator and Redeemer, calling people to forsake all self-seeking and self-sufficiency, all the idols they have so blindly worshiped, and to acknowledge Him, as did Thomas of old, as “my Lord and my God.”

Everywhere it has called men and women back to the Bible, back to the Ten Commandments, back to the holy Sabbath. Until today, scattered in all the larger countries of the world and many of the islands of the sea, there are well over a million people, speaking more than seven hundred languages, who “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” and wait eagerly, expectantly, for the day of His glorious appearing.

Returning to John on Patmos, we note that a second angel follows the first, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8).

The name Babel, from which Babylon is derived, is defined “confusion,” and the use of the term here suggests the state of the religious world in these last days. Some have applied it exclusively to the Papacy, but both within and without the Roman communion multitudes are confused with false doctrines, false traditions, foolish superstitions, all of which have no part in the true religion of Jesus.

Even organizations that have had access to the Bible, and should know better, have fallen from their high ideals and standards of earlier years, and disappointed Christ by their spiritual lethargy and carelessness. To one and all comes the urgent, challenging call of the Master, “Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

All who hear this call and know themselves to be yet in Babylon would do well to consider their position and the earnest warning of the Lord. This is the time for all the honest in heart, all who truly desire to please God and do the right, to leave Babylon and unite with the faithful, commandment-keeping, Christ-honoring remnant people now giving His last message to a dying world.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image,



and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:8-11).

Reading this strong denunciation of evildoers, we should keep in mind that this too was part of Christ's revelation to the apostle John. It was the loving Savior Himself who caused this solemn warning to be recorded in the Bible.

This third angel's message is indeed an integral part of Christ's last admonition and appeal to the people of the world. It is the final phase of His threefold call to the last generation of men to turn from their wickedness and live.

From this message we learn anew how deeply offensive is sin in the sight of God, and with what loathing He regards those persecuting powers that bring suffering to His faithful followers.

No attempt is made here to minimize the results of transgression, nor is there any suggestion that God is going to overlook the evil that men have done, and take everybody, regardless of his record, into His kingdom. Plain as words can make it is the fact that God is going to punish sinners, not only the ringleaders in crime, but also their foolish, misguided followers who, having rejected every divine invitation to repentance, persist in their rebellious and wicked ways.

Equally clear is the fact that in this hour of God's judgment, while the great separation proceeds in the courts above, another separation takes place on earth. A line of cleavage will appear between those possessing the seal of God and those who have the mark of the beast.

Those with the seal of God will be recognizable by reason of their Christian deportment, the piety and godliness of their lives. God's love, peace, and holiness will shine from their countenances and be revealed in their kind and gracious ministry to their fellow men. They will be known too by their respect for the laws of God and will be conspicuous by their observance of the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

Those having the mark of the beast will reveal by their lives that they belong not to Christ but to Satan. Their selfishness, greed, cruelty, and intolerance will make plain to all where their allegiance lies. Their complete indifference to the claims of God upon them will be manifested by their lawless behavior, and if they observe any day at all as holy, it will be the one that the great apostasy has for centuries claimed as the mark and sign of its authority.

Because of their harsh and evil spirit, because they deny the Lord that bought them, and give their loyalty to His enemies, judgment will finally fall upon them. They shall “drink of the wine of the wrath of God,” and ultimately “be tormented with fire and brimstone.” There is an awful price to pay for rebellion against God.

It is well to notice the similarity between this part of the third angel's message and Isaiah 34:8-10: “For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.”

This Old Testament passage helps us to understand the use of the term “for ever and ever” in Revelation 14:11. The torment of the wicked does not last eternally. Just as the people of Edom (against whom the prophecy of Isaiah 34 was primarily directed) are not still enduring the fire that consumed them, so will it be with the wicked. The fires will go out when there is nothing more to burn (Malachi 4:1). That this is God's intention is evident from the fact that after the great conflagration that consumes the wicked He will make “new heavens and a new earth” where sin shall not be remembered nor come to mind (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17).

Most important for us is the fact that the hour of decision has come. We have to make up our minds on which side we intend to stand in the closing crisis of the ages. Are we going to give our allegiance to Christ, or Satan? Shall we choose to have the seal of God, or the mark of the beast? Today Christ's last threefold message to man is being given to the world. It comes to you now. What will you do with it?

There is not long to make up your mind. Immediately after the three angels have passed by, their task accomplished, John says: I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe- (Revelation 14:14,15).

This is the coming of Jesus, the Second Advent of our blessed Lord. How wonderful that He should have told John about it so many centuries ago! With what satisfaction He must have revealed to His faithful servant that, after all the trials and persecution of His people, He would come at last to save them!

Yes, and in that day not one of His faithful saints will be forgotten. Not one grain of the precious wheat for which He gave His all shall be lost in the day of the great reaping; all will be carried in triumph to the heavenly garner. As the prophet Daniel said, “The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom.” John sees them at last upon the “sea of glass,” all suffering ended, all sorrows past, triumphantly singing “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:3). Dawn, happy day!

## 8. Christ's Righteous Wrath

WITH THE opening of the fifteenth chapter of Revelation, John begins to narrate another remarkable vision he was shown by Christ, this time concerning the fate of those who, in the last years of human history, array themselves against the plans and purposes of God.

"I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous," he says, "seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." (verse 1).

In an earlier vision he had seen the wrath of the dragon, now he is about to witness the wrath of God. The wrath of the dragon is directed against the church, and in particular against the remnant of the church in the latter days (Revelation 12:17). But the wrath of God is reserved for those who persist in open rebellion against Him and His government, and side with the dragon in his hatred of the followers of Jesus.

We are not to think from this that God is petulant and quarrelsome, becoming angry upon the slightest provocation. That would be projecting into our concept of God the weaknesses of our own characters. However, on the other hand, we must remember that although God is love, infinite and eternal love, it is also true that justice and judgment are the foundation of His throne. (Psalm 89:14, margin.) Though He loves sinners, He hates iniquity; and it would be strange indeed if He were not moved to righteous indignation by the savage, unprovoked attacks upon His innocent people by the hirelings of Satan.

As to the time when the seven last plagues are to be poured out, this is revealed by the fact that they are withheld until Christ's ministry as man's intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary is completed. Says John, "The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (Revelation 15:8). This must refer to the close of probation for sinners, when the cases of all, both living and dead, have been settled forever. Henceforth "he that is unjust" must remain unjust forever, and "he that is righteous" will be righteous forever (Revelation 22:11).

At this awful moment in human history, when the line separating the saved and the lost shall have been finally and irrevocably drawn, the plagues will begin to fall.

That this interpretation is correct is clear from John's report of what he witnessed when the first angel emptied his vial of divine displeasure. He writes:

"I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Revelation 16:1, 2).

In view of the fact that this plague is directed principally against those who have the mark of the beast, and who worship his image, it stands to reason that it must follow the proclamation of the third angel's message. Only after this worldwide warning has been given and rejected would any such visitation be fair and just.

Some have wondered whether this plague is to be thought of as happening literally, or whether its description is symbolic. It would be difficult, however, to conceive of a symbolic "sore." More reasonable would seem to be the view that, even as the Egyptian tormentors of Israel were themselves tormented by grievous bodily discomforts just before the Exodus, so the persecutors of the children of God in the last days will suffer in their own persons for their cruelty, this divine retribution taking place just prior to the exodus of the saints from earth to heaven at Christ's return in glory.

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" (verse 3). Whether but one sea is to be thus affected or all the oceans is not made plain. Nor is anything said as to how so dreadful a disaster could take place. But a similar judgment came upon Egypt (Exodus 7:17-21), and there is no reason why God could not cause it to occur again. And could any scourge be more terrible than one resulting in the death of all the fish in the sea, with the water itself resembling blood? What a scene of pollution every beach would present!

"And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood" (Revelation 16:4).

The emphasis again is upon blood, and there is a reason for this. John hears a voice saying, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and was, and shall be, because thou has judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou has given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments" (verses 5-7).

It is true that God's remnant people will not be slain by their enemies but be preserved by God's mercy for translation at Christ's coming, yet it will not be for want of attempts upon their lives by their persecutors. The

worshippers of the beast and his image will be possessed of the same dragon spirit that caused the death of millions of martyrs throughout the ages, and therefore will be considered as guilty of murder as if they had actually killed the saints. (Matthew 23:24-31; 1 John 3:15.)

“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory” (Revelation 16:8, 9).

It would seem that these plagues must follow in quick succession, or else the entire population of the earth would be wiped out. One has but to consider the situation that will exist when the great heat wave begins, and there is no water to drink, because all springs have been fouled, and there are no cooling seas to which to flee, because they stink beyond endurance with the smell of rotting fish.

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (verses 10, 11).

There is something exceptionally appropriate about this visitation. The place that has been the center of spiritual darkness for centuries is now enveloped in physical darkness. And what is “the seat of the beast”? Obviously the functioning headquarters of that great religion-political system that dominated the world for 1260 years, from which more false doctrine and more incitement to persecution have emanated than from any other organization since time began. This seat of error, superstition, and religious intolerance is marked on the battle plan of God's aerial armada to receive a special judgment, most richly deserved.

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.... And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (verses 12-16).

This plague appears to be more of a preparation for some major catastrophe than a disaster itself. The Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East. The spirits of devils work upon the kings of the whole world to prepare them for the battle of Armageddon. Not until the seventh angel pours out his vial does the cosmic upheaval occur.

Speculation concerning unfulfilled prophecy is always perilous, and we have no desire to indulge in it in this connection. Students of this highly important prediction cannot remind themselves too frequently that it refers to one of the seven plagues to be poured out after the close of probation and after the occurrence of the five preceding plagues, each of which will undoubtedly receive immediate, universal publicity and reveal to the entire population of the earth that the day of God's wrath has come.

It could well be, of course, that long before this plague occurs, certain trends will become noticeable, indicating that the developments foreshadowed will shortly come to pass. The spirits of devils, for instance, will need time—more time than seems likely to be available amid the swiftly falling plagues—to foment the hatred, bitterness, and strife necessary to cause “the kings of the earth and of the whole world” to come up to “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” Consequently, it is not unlikely that we may observe preparations for Armageddon taking shape about us today.

Of special interest in this connection are the sources of agitation and propaganda that ultimately bring about the final global calamity. It will be noted that the “spirits of devils,” also referred to as “unclean spirits,” come leaping “like frogs” “out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet!”

These are the very powers Christ mentions in His revelation to John of the troubles and sorrows ahead of His church. The three archenemies of His cause and people, it will be recalled, are the great red dragon, the leopard beast, and the image to the beast that is supported and activated by the two-horned beast, which resembles a lamb but speaks as a dragon. As already interpreted, these symbols stand for pagan Rome, papal Rome, and that modern New World revival of Romanism which might be called, for want of a better term, apostate Protestantism.

If one were looking for three such powers today, each one a center of intense propaganda, that could plunge the world into universal tragedy with the slightest additional provocation, it would not be difficult to find them. We need not even point them out.

As to the nature of the conflict foreshadowed here, and how vast will be the operations involved, no details are given. One thing is certain: When “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” is finally joined, it will be the signal for divine intervention. With awful suddenness the devilish plans of the enemies of Christ will be brought to naught as He appears in the skies.

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done” (verse 17). This surely is an echo of that voice which cried from the cross in the long ago, “It is finished.” When it is heard again, the last effort to save the lost will have been made. The last child of God will have suffered at the hands of the powers of evil. The last sermon will have been preached, the last souls baptized, and the last saint buried.

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great” (verses 18-21).

This tremendous consummation cannot now be far distant. Soon, and with awful suddenness, it will be upon us. God help us to be prepared for that great day.

## 9. Christ's Final Triumph

CHAPTERS SEVENTEEN to nineteen of the book of Revelation should be read as a unit, for they describe various phases of Christ's final triumph over all the agencies of evil in the world. Here, under new and striking symbolism, the Lord of glory reassures His people that their faithfulness and loyalty are not forgotten and that the doom of their oppressors and persecutors is sure and certain.

Chapter sixteen closes with the judgments of God being released upon the multitudes of the unsaved who assemble at Armageddon for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Scarcely has this scene passed before John sees one of the angels that poured out the seven last plagues coming toward him, saying, "Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:1,2).

It is as though the angel said, "You have seen what happened to those who had the mark of the beast, and who worshiped his image. Now behold what God will do to the power that is primarily responsible for confusing the minds of men with false doctrines and leading them by millions into rebellion against their Maker."

John may well have expected to see the leopard beast again, but instead he says: I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (verses 3-6).

John is astonished beyond words. A savage monster might attack the saints, but not a woman. Surely no woman would do so fearful a thing!

Who is this woman? Just as a good woman represents the true church of Christ (Revelation 12:1), so an evil woman, in prophetic symbolism, represents a false, apostate church. This woman rides upon a beast, signifying the dependence of this apostate church upon the state. In her sinful pride she utters terrible blasphemies and drinks the blood of the saints, whom the state at her behest destroys.

The similarity between this dreadful caricature of a church and the leopard beast of Revelation 13 and the little-horn power of Daniel 7 is so close as to be unmistakable. Any unbiased reader would say that, to all intents and purposes, they are identical. Unquestionably, the evil woman of Revelation 17 represents precisely the same great religion-political power portrayed by these other symbols-that power which bestrode the world like a colossus throughout the Dark Ages, bringing frightful hardship and suffering to the true children of God. With her priestly hierarchy arrayed in purple and scarlet, and her temples decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, she dominated the minds of millions through many generations.

John's attention is directed particularly to the ten horns on the beast that the wicked woman rides. These represent the same ten kingdoms referred to in Daniel 7, which developed out of the Roman Empire, and became the nations of modern Europe. They reign "one hour" with the beast, giving it their power and strength. The time comes, however, when an astonishing change takes place.

Says the angel to John, "The ten horns which thou saw upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Revelation 17:16).

In these few dramatic words the fate of Rome is sealed. Completely disillusioned at last, the powers that have so long supported this apostate religious organization shall turn upon her in great fury. Figuratively speaking, they shall "eat her flesh, and burn her with fire," signifying a final and total extirpation.

These secular powers themselves shall contend with the Lamb in the person of His followers, but they too shall perish in "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." "The Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful- (verse 14).

Lest there be any lingering doubt in John's mind concerning the fate of all such organizations which defy the Lord of heaven and persecute His children on the earth, the fate of Babylon is set forth in still greater detail in the vision recorded in chapter eighteen.

"After these things," writes the apostle, "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird....

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of

her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. . . . Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her.” (verses 1-8).

What is meant by the term “Babylon” in this passage? It would seem to include far more than those who acknowledge the sovereignty of the scarlet woman, who had “Babylon the great written on her forehead (Revelation 17:5). No doubt it embraces also the daughters of Babylon, those religious organizations which sprang from that apostate church. These started out well, with the highest ideals and motives, and God's full approbation, but with the lapse of years they largely lost their way. Doubts and skepticism destroyed their faith, sapped their spiritual vitality, lowered their moral standards, and opened their gates to worldliness. Giving heed to spiritism, many of them let the fallen angels, in the guise of spirits of the dead, confuse and mislead them. In all too many ways they have “fallen” and forfeited the favor of God.

The weakness of the witness of many professedly Christian churches against the abounding wickedness of our times is one of the most disappointing aspects of the present world situation. Their message has been so diluted with modernism and so watered down with “naturalism,” that it has become well nigh meaningless.

Not all Christians, of course, are thus contaminated with the spirit of apostasy. That there are in fact multitudes of godly, honest hearted people within the Protestant denominations who have not yet “bowed the knee to Baal” is obvious from the urgent appeal, “Come out of her, my people.” Many of God's people are still in Babylon. But let them not delay in their decision. They must act, and act soon, for God's judgments on Babylon are about to fall.

The description of Babylon's fate is enough to strike fear to every heart. John sees some “standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buys their merchandise any more. The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble.... The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to naught. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!” (Revelation 18:10-18).

The judgment upon Babylon brings the collapse of the world's economy. The worst depression of all time begins. Trade ceases. Prosperity vanishes. Poverty grips all. “Death, and mourning, and famine” envelop the earth.

“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” (verse 21).

With Babylon disposed of, and Christ's victory complete, what remains but the shouting? Suddenly John hears it—the wonderful sound of a great multitude of happy people crying out with deep emotion: “Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. . . . Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, and you that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns.” (Revelation 19:1-6).

In the closing words of this mighty paean of praise we glimpse the very heart and core of “the revelation of Jesus Christ ... . The Lord God omnipotent reigns” - the very message declared by the prophet Daniel: “The most High rules in the kingdom of men.” This glorious affirmation of the eternal sovereignty of God is the source and summary of every assurance that righteousness and truth shall ultimately triumph. Upon this rock the church of Christ is built, and the gates of hell cannot and shall not prevail against it. Satan may employ his most devilish devices to bring about its downfall, but he shall not succeed. As a dragon, he may seek to devour it; as a leopard like beast, he may persecute it; as a two-horned beast, he may proscribe it and condemn it to death; but still he shall fail. Through every attack and every trial the true church will be preserved, for Christ is its friend, and Christ is God, and “the Lord God omnipotent reigns.”

Suddenly John's eyes turn toward heaven once again, and his old heart thrills at the sight that meets his gaze. Jesus is coming again!

I saw heaven opened,” he says, “and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in

blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (verses 11-16).

This is the wondrous scene that John had so long and so ardently yearned to see: his beloved Lord and Master returning in the clouds of heaven, with all the holy angels with Him; Christ triumphant at last over all His enemies! Now in God's mercy he is permitted to see it in vision, as it will happen in very truth someday, when all the conflicts of the church are over and the victory through Christ is won.



## 10. Christ's Millennium of Peace

WITH THE triumph of Christ complete and all His enemies vanquished, but one question remains: What is to happen to Satan, the originator and sponsor of all evil? Surely never again must he be permitted to perpetrate the crimes with which he cursed the human race for six thousand years.

What will Christ do with him? In the twentieth chapter of Revelation He unveils to John His plans for the control of the arch deceiver and arch criminal of the universe until the time when final judgment shall be executed upon him.

"I saw an angel come down from heaven," says John, -having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:1-3).

Obviously this language is symbolic, for it is unthinkable that Satan could be confined by a metal chain. But if not by a literal chain, how is he chained? There can be but one reasonable answer -a chain of circumstances. And the circumstances that will prevail after Christ's Second Advent will be such as to bring about the confinement here suggested.

First, the righteous will have left the earth. Caught up to meet Christ in the air, they will be in heaven. John sees them there, sitting on thrones, judging the wicked. I saw," he says, "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (verse 4).

As for the wicked, they will be dead, all of them slain by the brightness of Christ's coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

This means that the entire earth will be depopulated. On all the six continents and the seven seas there will not be a soul left alive. Amid the ruins of all the cities, which fell in the shattering earthquake of the last days (Revelation 16:19), there will be neither sound nor movement. Everywhere only an awful emptiness, a fearful silence.

Here, in this terrifying wilderness, Satan will be confined for a thousand years. Here in this "bottomless pit," or abyss of ruin, he will contemplate the frightful results of his wicked rebellion against his Maker. With no one to tempt or lead astray, he will be effectually chained throughout the entire period of his imprisonment.

This will indeed be a millennium of peace both for Christ and for His people. Not, as some have imagined, a millennium of material prosperity on earth, but rather a thousand years of unutterable bliss amid the glories of heaven. Safe at last within the "many mansions," which Christ promised to prepare for His faithful followers (John 14:1-3), in the New Jerusalem, "which is above," they will taste the first exquisite joys of their eternal reward. Their welcome by the angels, who have watched their struggles and their sufferings through the centuries, will be wonderful beyond all imagining. And, as the apostle Paul wrote, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

There will be duties as well as joys for the redeemed in heaven. At this time David's prediction will come to pass: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints." (Psalm 149:5-9).

So will it come about in God's providence that the saints, during the thousand years they spend with Christ in heaven, will decide the final punishment of their persecutors. Before them, as the books of heaven are opened, the whole sorry story of human failure will be spread out, and with full knowledge and understanding their decisions will be made.

As the millennium draws to a close the earth will become once more a scene of great activity. The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven, Christ Himself preparing a place for it, most appropriately, where the Mount of Olives once stood (Zechariah 14:4). Every inhabitant, even the youngest, will be more than a thousand years old, and will vividly realize that the final disposal of rebellion and its works is at hand.

Simultaneously the voice of God will call the wicked from their graves. Filled with the same evil spirit which they carried with them to death, they will come forth eager to take vengeance on the righteous.

This will be Satan's opportunity. Suddenly his chain will be broken. Automatically he will be loosed from

his prison and will go out, as of old, "to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (Revelation 20:8, 9).

It is a foolish enterprise, as all Satan's schemes prove at last to be, and suddenly it will collapse, the jostling multitudes being frozen with fear as the glory of God is revealed above the Holy City.

Says John: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (verses 11, 12).

What a day and what a gathering that will be! Kings and commoners, conquerors and slaves, popes and priests, preachers and missionaries, merchants and clerks, capitalists and laborers, rich and poor, high and low, cruel and kind, mean and generous all will be there: the people of all nations, all languages, all colors, all generations. And hovering over all will be the entire angelic host, summoned from the farthest reaches of the universe to witness the final scene in the long controversy between Christ and Satan.

And now, before judgment is executed, the books of heaven will be opened once more. In silent awe the assembled multitudes will hear the story of God's dealings with the human race, of His wondrous plan of salvation, of His immeasurable love for a world of sinners, of His infinite sacrifice in giving Christ to die upon Calvary's cross. Before the recital is complete all will realize that God could have done no more; that He loved to the uttermost, and made every provision to enable men to escape the penalty of sin.

When at last the full story has been told, not a voice will be raised in protest. Instead, at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

Then, as saints and angels veil their faces in sorrow and pity, fire will come down from God out of heaven, consuming the wicked, root and branch (Malachi 4:1). Thus will the tragedy of sin come to its end. "This is the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (verse 15). Imagine the anguish of discovering, too late, that one's name is missing from that book! Or realizing, too late, that all the joys of eternity are forfeited because one was too careless, too indifferent, to accept God's gracious offer of salvation!

Is your name written there? Are you sure? If not, ask God to write it now.

## 11. Christ's' Wonderland of Tomorrow

THE STORY is almost told. The powers of evil have been overthrown. Christ has been vindicated before all the universe, and His divine lordship acknowledged by saved and unsaved alike. Satan, shamed and discredited, has suffered his just reward, together with all who followed him into rebellion against God. Sin and sinners are no more. The fires that destroyed them have swept around the globe, consuming every trace of the results of transgression. (2 Peter 3:10.) What next? What lies beyond?

Once more, and for the last time, Christ unveils the future to His faithful servant, permitting him to glimpse His wonderland of tomorrow, the glorious, eternal home He is preparing for all who love Him.

“And I saw,” says John, “a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).

Like a chime of distant bells upon a summer evening, the promise of this glorious tomorrow rings in our ears. God will be with His people forever. Never again shall there be a wall of separation between them. Nevermore shall they be the prey of evildoers. Their divine Redeemer and Protector shall abide with them through all time to come.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” The wonder and the glory of this assurance are almost beyond our understanding. The Lord of heaven to wipe away our tears? Yes, indeed! With infinite tenderness and compassion He will remove every cause for crying, and none shall ever weep again. There will be no unhappy memories, no more disappointments, no more partings, no more saying good-by.

And no more death! Never again will any saint be called upon to give his life for his Lord. Never again will there be a procession to the stake, to the executioner's block, or to the guillotine. Nevermore will one of God's children perish in some dismal dungeon or expire in anguish on the rack. There will be no more bedside farewells, no more funerals, not a single gravestone in all God's beautiful world.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” (verse 5). All things. Nothing will be left to remind God's people of the dark, sad days of long ago, nothing, that is, save the prints of the wounds in Christ's hands (Habakkuk 3:4). The former things, the ugly things, the suffering, the misery, the wretchedness, the pain, the disappointments, the hardships - all these will have passed away. Everywhere the saints shall look all will be new and beautiful and lovely. Nowhere will there be anything to bring a pang of sorrow, a thought of fear, or even one single moment of displeasure or dissatisfaction to the heart.

“Write,” says the Lord to John: “for these words are true and faithful... I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son- (Revelation 21:5-7).

As John hears these gracious words he recalls the time when Jesus spoke to him at the beginning of all these wondrous revelations. That glorious voice like a trumpet which startled him in his loneliness, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” I am he that lived, and was dead. And, behold, I am alive for evermore.” Blessed and ever-glorious truth! Jesus is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” He was present when the story of the church began. He will be present at its close. He will be with His people forever.

And how exquisitely beautiful is His final promise to the overcomer: “He . . . shall inherit all things.” All these new and beautiful things which infinite wisdom and love have planned for the redeemed. Yes, and best of all, “he shall be my son,” adopted forever into the family of God, an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, to share with Him the inexhaustible treasures of heaven through all eternity!

John is now shown the New Jerusalem, and the glory of it is almost too much for him. He finds the city almost impossible to describe.

What is it like? It is full of glory and light, he says, “like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (verse 11). And it has a wall, “great and high,” and has twelve gates, “and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates. On the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (verses 12-14).

“And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: . . . twelve thousand furlongs” (verse

16).

Evidently it is a very large city -375 miles each way. When one considers that Greater New York, twenty miles in length, contains about eight million people, one gets a faint idea of the vast capacity of the capital city of the new earth. We may be sure that, with the mansions in the city and all the lovely homes throughout that wondrous Eden land, there will be ample accommodation for all the redeemed.

And there will be no slums there. No, indeed! Nor will anyone ever be dispossessed of his property by some grasping landlord. As the prophet Isaiah says: "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them" (Isaiah 65: 21-23).

John is intrigued by the foundations of the city. They are not made of logs, or concrete, but rather of "all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, a sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysolite; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst" (Rev. 21:19, 20).

As the light from the throne of God shines through these many colored foundations the effect is beautiful beyond description. So, too, with the gates, which seem to John to be made of pearl-each gate a single pearl! And the streets appear as pure gold, gleaming like "transparent glass."

He looks for a temple, but finds none. There is no need for any, for no more sacrifice for sin will ever be required. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it," he says (verse 22).

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." Not that the sun and the moon will cease to shine, but their light will not be necessary, "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (verse 23).

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." (verse 24).

Who are these kings? Not earthly rulers in the usual meaning of the term, but those who have overcome by the Word of God and their testimony for Christ; those who have gladly accepted Jesus as their Savior, and have been made "kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6). Any glory and honor they may have won by their lives of sacrifice and service for their Lord they gladly lay humbly before Him.

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there" (Revelation 21:25). There is no need to shut the gates, for there are no enemies. There is no one to fear. All are friends. And there is no night, no darkness, nothing to make one afraid.

John enters the city, and in amazement notices "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him" (Revelation 22:1-3).

Evidently the New Jerusalem is a garden city, with a lovely stream of crystal-clear water flowing through all its principal streets. Upon the banks of this river is the tree of life, the very tree from which Adam and Eve were barred after their sad mistake. Now it grows on both sides of the river, its wondrous fruit free for the taking by every fortunate inhabitant.

But the chief attraction is not the streets of gold or the gates of pearl or the foundations of precious stones-not even the tree of life itself-but the constant presence of Jesus. "And they shall see his face," says John, who longed to see it so much. They shall see it always. Forever and ever Jesus will be with His people, "and his name shall be in their foreheads" (verse 4).

As John glimpses Christ's wonderland of tomorrow he longs to be there. He feels he can hardly wait for its realization. How long will it be till he can enter the pearly gates and fling himself in love and adoration at his Savior's feet? Not long. -Behold, I come quickly," Jesus assures him: "Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (verse 7).

Again, a little later, He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. ... Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (verses 12-14).

Lest there be any doubt as to the source of all these revelations, the Master says, I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (verse 16).

It is as though Jesus said to John, "Tell everybody what I have told you. Tell them of the certainty of My

victory. Tell them of the light beyond the shadows. Tell them to hold fast their faith, and all will be well at last. Tell them of the wonderland I am preparing for all who love Me. Tell them I want them to be there. Tell them, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (verse 17)."

Now for the third and last time He says, "Surely I come quickly."

John's heart leaps at the thought. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" he cries.

May this be the cry of your heart and mine this day. May it rise up from every child of God in all the world. May the church universal storm the battlements of heaven with earnest prayers for His return.

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